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THE EARLY AMERICAN SPIRIT,

AND

THE GENESIS OF IT.

THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

AND

THE EFFECTS OF IT.

BY

RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D.

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE following Addresses have been previously published in separate pamphlets; but the edition of each being exhausted, and a desire having been expressed that the two should be combined in a volume, the publishers now present them in this form to the public.

The first of these Addresses was delivered before the New York Historical Society, on the occasion of the celebration of its Seventieth Anniversary, April 15, 1875.

The second was delivered before the citizens of New York, in accordance with the invitation of their distinguished committee, at the celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of American Independence, July 4, 1876.

The favor with which the Addresses were received by the large and cultivated audiences convened on these respective occasions, at the Academy of Music, and the acceptance which they have since met with from the public, as presenting in brief compass a lucid and just exhibition of the earlier and the later life and progress of the American people, have induced the publishers to embody them in this more permanent form, for their wider circulation, and the easier preservation of them by those into whose hands they come.



THE EARLY AMERICAN SPIRIT, AND
THE GENESIS OF IT.

ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT: MEMBERS OF THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY: LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:

THE anniversary by which we are assembled marks the completion of the seventieth year of the useful life of this Society. It is an occasion of interest to all of us, if regarded only in this relation. There are some present who remember still the founders of the Society: Egbert Benson, its first President, John Pintard, Brockholst Livingston, Dr. John M. Mason, Drs. Samuel L. Mitchill and David Hosack, Rufus King, Samuel Bayard, Daniel D. Tompkins, DeWitt Clinton, and others whose names are less familiar. There are many present to whom are recalled memorable faces, by the names of those who in subsequent years received its honors, or shared its labors, who are not now among the living: John Jay, Albert Gallatin, John Duer, Dr. McVickar, Gulian Verplanck, Charles King, Dr. John W. Francis, William L. Stone, Edward Robinson, Luther Bradish, Romeyn Brodhead, Dr. De Witt.

All of us, who are of a studious habit, have enjoyed the labors and the influence of the Society, and have

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been encouraged and quickened by it, as well as more directly aided, in the small excursions which we have made into the domain of historical knowledge.

It is a source, therefore, I am sure, of unfeigned satisfaction to all of us to be able this evening to congratulate the honored President of the Society, its officers, and its members, on the success which it has accomplished, and on the promise of increasing prosperity with which its future here salutes us. In its incorporeal and continuing life, it has the dignity of age, without its decays. Its seventy years have brought larger fame, ampler resources, wider responsibilities; but it has still the privilege of youth—the fair and far outlook of existence in its prime. It projects our thoughts, from this eminent anniversary over the periods which it anticipates, as well as over that which it reviews; and we shall joyfully unite in the hope that its coming career may be only more full of gladness and growth than has been its past, and that its influence may constantly extend, as the years augment its possessions and its fame.

Such institutions are beneficent powers in civilization. Whatever transports us from the present to the past, from the near to the remote, widens the mind as well as instructs it; makes it capacious, and reflective; sets it free, in a relative independence of local impulse and of transient agitation; gives it, in a measure, a character cosmopolitan, and a culture universal. Whatever recalls to us eminent persons—their brilliant and

Usefulness of such Societies.

engaging parts, above all, their fortitude, wisdom, self-sacrifice—re-enforces our manhood, encourages our virtue, and makes us ashamed of our indolent self-indulgence, of our impatient and fitful habit.

A community like ours—restless, changeful, abounding in wealth, vehemently self-confident—especially needs such inspiring impressions from a more austere and temperate past. A Society which presents that, through libraries and lectures, is ethical, educational, and not merely ornamental. In larger proportions, with more copious ministry, it fulfils the office of the statue of Erasmus, standing always, with a book in its hand, in the market-place of Rotterdam, amid the intricate network of canals, and in the incessant roar of traffic. It materializes again the shadowy forms. It breathes upon communities, languid or luxurious, an ennobling force, from vanished actions and silent lips. Presenting, as to immediate vision, the patient and achieving years into whose conquests we have entered, it makes us aware of the duty which always matches our privilege, and of the judgment which coming time will strictly pronounce upon our era. It ministers to whatever most aspires in man, to whatever is worthiest in civilization. And so it concerns the public welfare that this Society should long fulfill its important office, while the city expands to wider splendor, and the years fly on with accelerating haste; that this anniversary should be one in a series, stretching forward beyond our life, beyond the life of those

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who succeed us, while the country continues the inviting and affluent home of men.

But this anniversary is not the only one to which our thoughts are to-night directed. By the irresistible progress of time, we are set face to face with others which are at once to occur, the succession of which, during several years, is to make large claim upon our attention; and these are anniversaries, in comparison with whose significance, and whose secular importance, the one which assembles us would lose its dignity if it were not itself associated with them.

History can but picture events; setting forth, in a measure, their causes and consequences, and indicating the varieties of action and of character which were involved in them. It is, as has been said, "the biography of communities." These Societies which promote historical studies have it for their function to collect the materials, cultivate the tastes, assist the minute and complex investigations, out of which comes the ultimate enlightening historical narrative. Their office is therefore subordinate and auxiliary, though quickening and fine. The office of the historians whom they instruct, is commemorative only, not creative. They are the heralds who marshal the procession, not the princely figures who walk in it. They exhibit actions which they did not perform, and describe events in producing which they had no part.

When, then, the events themselves are before us, the mere narrative of which the student writes and the

Another Anniversary.

library assists, our chief attention is challenged by them. Contemplating them, we lose sight, comparatively, of the instruments which had made their outline familiar, forgetting the processes before the vitality and the mass of the facts to which these had brought us. It is with us as with the traveler, who ceases to remember the ship which carried him across the seas, when he treads the streets of the distant town, watches its unfamiliar manners, hears the dissonance of its strange speech, and looks with a surprised delight on its religious or civil architecture. So we, in front of the great events, the signal actions, the mean or the illustrious characters, to which the historical narrative has borne us, forget for the time the narrative itself, or only remember the intellectual grace which moulded its lines, the strength of proof which confirmed its conclusions, the buoyant movement with which it bore us across intervening floods of time.

We stand, as a people, in the presence of a commanding Past, and shall continue so to do in succeeding years of our national experience. One centennial anniversary, dear to the thoughts of every lover of English eloquence and American liberty, has passed already; and you will pardon me, perhaps, if I pause upon that, because it has suggested the theme on which I would offer some remarks.

It was just one hundred years ago, on the twenty-second of March last, that Edmund Burke delivered in the British Parliament that speech on "Concilia-

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tion with the Colonies," which, of itself, would have assured the fame of any speaker. The profoundest political and legislative wisdom was presented in it with perspicuous clearness, and enforced with an eloquence which Burke himself never surpassed. In eager and majestic utterance, he recited the circumstances which had led him to seek, with impassioned ardor, to promote the reconciliation of the colonies to the Government of Great Britain; and to do this by repealing the acts of Parliament against which resistance had here been aroused, and by adjusting future legislation on the plan of getting an American revenue, as England had got its American empire, by securing to the colonies the ancient and inestimable English privileges.

The speech is, of course, familiar to you; yet a rapid indication of its compact and coercive argument may serve, perhaps, to revive it in your thoughts, as a couplet sometimes recalls a poem, as the touch of even an unskilful crayon may set before us the wide outreach of a landscape.

The circumstance to which he first referred, was the rapid increase of the colonial population; an increase so swift, and so continuing, that, in his own words, "state the numbers as high as we will, whilst the dispute continues, the exaggeration ends. . . . Your children do not grow faster from infancy to manhood, than they [of the colonies] spread from families to communities, and from villages to nations."

The Oration of Burke.

The second circumstance which impressed his mind, was the commerce of the colonies: "out of all proportion, beyond the numbers of the people;" in respect to which "fiction lags after truth; invention is unfruitful, and imagination cold and barren." Of their expanding agriculture, he said: "For some time past the Old World has been fed from the New. The scarcity which you have felt would have been a desolating famine, if this child of your old age, with a true filial piety, with a Roman charity, had not put the full breast of its youthful exuberance to the mouth of its exhausted parent." Of the fisheries of the colonies, especially of the whale-fishery, he spoke in words whose fame is co-extensive with the English tongue, as carried to an extent beyond that reached by "the perseverance of Holland, the activity of France, or the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise;" and this by a people "who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

Still more important, however, before his view than either the increasing population of the colonies, their agriculture, or their commerce, was the temper and character of the people who composed them; in which a love of freedom appeared to him the predominating feature, distinguishing the whole. The people of the colonies were descendants of Englishmen. They were, therefore, "not only devoted to liberty, but to liberty according to English ideas;" and so they were

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fundamentally opposed, with all the force of immemorial tradition, to that taxation without representation, against which the English lovers of freedom had always fought. Their popular form of government, through provincial assemblies, contributed to foster this attachment to liberty. Their religion gave to this civil influence complete effect. "The people," he said, "are Protestants; and of that kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion. . . . Their religion is a refinement on the principle of resistance; it is the dissidence of dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion."

If this were not strictly true in the southern colonies, where the Church of England had wider establishment, yet the spirit of liberty was there only higher and haughtier than in others, because they had a multitude of slaves; and "where this is the case," he affirmed, "in any part of the world, those who are free, are by far the most proud and jealous of their freedom. . . . The haughtiness of domination combines with the spirit of freedom, fortifies it, and renders it invincible."

The education of the colonies, particularly the extent to which the study of the law was cultivated among them, contributed to their untractable spirit. It led them, not, "like more simple people, to judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance," but to "anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle."

Burke's Conclusion as to the Colonies.

The last cause of the disobedient spirit in the colonies, to which he called the attention of Parliament, was "laid deep in the natural constitution of things"—in the remoteness of their situation; the three thousand miles of ocean forever intervening between England and them.

From all these sources, the ever-widening spirit of liberty had grown up in the colonies, now unalterable by any contrivance. "We cannot," he said, "we cannot, I fear, falsify the pedigree of this fierce people, and persuade them that they are not sprung from a nation in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates. . . . I think it is nearly as little in our power to change their republican religion as their free descent; . . . and the education of the Americans is also on the same unalterable bottom with their religion;" while, if all these moral difficulties could be got over, "the ocean remains. You cannot pump this dry. And as long as it continues in its present bed, so long all the causes which weaken authority by distance will continue."

His inference from all was, that no way was open to the Government of Great Britain, but to "comply with the American spirit as necessary; or, if you please, to submit to it, as a necessary evil." "My hold of the colonies," he said, "is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties, which, though light as air, are strong as

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links of iron. Let the colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government ;—they will cling and grapple to you ; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. . . . The more they multiply, the more friends you will have ; the more ardently they love liberty, the more perfect will be their obedience. . . . It is the spirit of the English Constitution, which, infused through the mighty mass, pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates, vivifies every part of the empire, even down to the minutest member.”

If I were in the least ambitious, Ladies and Gentlemen, to attract your attention to any imagined skill of my own in presenting a subject, I should not have ventured thus to recall to you the magnificent scope, the pervading power, the instinctive and harmonious splendor, of that memorable oration with which, a hundred years ago last month, the oaken rafters of St. Stephen’s rang. The perfect apprehension of remote facts, as when the distant seas or summits are seen by an eye which needs no glass, through a wholly transparent air ; the vast comprehension, which took into immediate vision all facts and principles related to the subject, tracing at a glance their inter-relations, as one traces the lines of city streets from a ‘coigne of vantage’ above the roofs, and sees the rivers on either hand which kiss the piers ; the opulence of knowledge ; the precision and force of argumentation ; the fervor of feeling, the energy of purpose, which

The Early Spirit of the Colonies.

modulated the rhetoric to its consenting grace and majesty; the lucid and large philosophy of history; the imperial imagination, vitalizing all, and touching it with ethereal lights:—we look at these, and almost feel that eloquence died when the lips of Burke were finally closed. One's impulse is to turn to silence; and not even to offer his few small coins, more paltry than ever before the wealth of such regalia.

But I have no desire at all, except to stand with you a few moments at the point of view at which the oration of Burke has placed us, and to seek, with you, to revive in our thoughts, with a little more of fulness in detail, the origin and the growth of that essential and prophesying spirit which he from afar discerned in these colonies. For in that lies the secret of our subsequent history. It is not certain that Burke himself, looking at the matter through the partial lights of English narrative, and treating the subject for immediate practical influence upon Parliament, has fully set forth either the sources or the strength of the temper which he saw. But the complete understanding of these is most important to whomsoever would read our annals.

The remark was long ago made by Macchiavelli,* that 'States are rarely formed or re-formed save by

* "It must be laid down as a general rule, that it very seldom or never happens that any government is either well-founded at first, or thoroughly reformed afterwards, except the plan be laid and conducted by one man only, who has the sole power of giving all orders, and making all laws, that are necessary for its establishment."

Political Discourses, upon Livy. Book I., chap. ix.

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one man.' Certainly, however, it was not so with ours. The spirit shaped the body, here, according to the Platonic plan. The people formed its own commonwealths, its ultimate Nation; and "the people," says Bancroft, looking back to the peace of 1782, "the people was superior to its institutions, possessing the vital force which goes before organization, and gives to it strength and form."* This vital force, therefore, in the pre-Revolutionary American people, this inherent and energizing life, early developed, largely trained, acting at that time, and acting ever since, on our organized public development—this is the subject which I hope you will accept, as deserving your attention, and not unsuited to this occasion.

At the time when Burke saw the meaning, and interpreted the meaning, of this distinctive American spirit, it had all the force which he ascribed to it; and the effect of it was shown, only more speedily, in larger and more energetic discovery, than he expected. It can scarcely be doubted that if the counsels of his wise statesmanship had been listened to by the Parliament on whose unheeding ears they fell, and by the Court which passionately repulsed them, the separation which was inevitable, between England and the colonies, would for a time have been postponed; and some of us might have been born, on American shores, the loyal subjects of King George. But those counsels were not heeded; as those of Chatham, six

* History of the United States, Vol. X, p. 593.

First Movements in the Colonies.

weeks earlier, in the House of Lords, had not been; and just four weeks after they were uttered, before report of them could probably have reached this country, on the 19th of April, at Lexington and at Concord, out of the threatening murk of discontent shot that fierce flash of armed collision between the colonists and the troops of Great Britain, beyond which reconciliation was impossible; of which the war, and the following Independence, were the predestined sequel.

Not quite a month later, as you remember, on the 10th of May, Ticonderoga, with Crown Point, was taken by the provincials; and on the very day of the capture—as if to justify the name “Carillon,” given by the French to Ticonderoga, and to make its seizure the striking of a chime of bells*—the Continental Congress re-assembled at Philadelphia, with the proscribed John Hancock soon at its head, and entered on the exercise of its long authority; an authority vague and undefined, as such an occasional authority must be, but made legitimate, and made comprehensive, by the voluntary submission of those whom the Congress represented. Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief. As indicative of the tendencies of public opinion, before the end of May, the citizens of Mecklenburg county, in North Carolina, by public action

* “To Ticonderoga, the Indian ‘Meeting of Waters,’ they [the French] gave a name apparently singular, ‘Carillon,’ a Chime of Bells.

Egbert Benson’s Mem.; Coll. of the N. Y. Hist. Soc., 2d Series: Vol. 2 page 96.

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disowned allegiance to the British Crown, and adopted their declaration of Independence; and on the 17th of June, at Breed's Hill, the ability of the provincials to throw up redoubts under the cannon-fire of a fleet, and to make grass fences, with men behind them, a sufficient barrier to repeated charges of British veterans, was fully proved; and the great drama of our seven years' war was finally opened.

During the years immediately before us, these events, with those which succeeded, will be fully recited; and eloquence and poetry, the picture and the bronze, will again make familiar what the bulk and the prominence of intervening events had partly hidden from our view. The evacuation of Boston by the British; the bloody fight on the heights behind Brooklyn, so nearly fatal to the American cause; the crossing of the Delaware; the night attack on the Hessians at Trenton; Princeton, and Germantown, with the frightful winter at Valley Forge; the battles of Monmouth, Saratoga, Camden, King's Mountain, and Eutaw Springs; the final surrender of Cornwallis, at Yorktown:—all will in their turn be described, as their centennial anniversaries occur. The Past will come back to us. We shall hear again the pathetic and heroic story which touched the common-place life of our childhood with romance and with awe.

And with this will be repeated the narrative—not less impressive—of the civil wonders which accompanied the long military struggle; of the separate

Mr. Bancroft's History.

Constitutions adopted by the colonies ; of the great Declaration, which raised those colonies into a Nation ; of the marvellous State-papers, which seemed to Europe prepared in the woods, yet on which the highest encomiums were pronounced, by eminent Englishmen, in Parliament itself ; of the Articles of Confederation, which prepared the way for an organic Union ; of the French alliance, which brought soldiers of a monarchy to fight for a republic, and sent back with them a republican spirit too strong for the monarchy ; of the money, so worthless that a bushel of it would hardly buy a pair of shoes ; of the military stores, so utterly inadequate that barrels of sand had to represent powder, to encourage the troops ; of the final adoption, after the war, of that now venerable Constitution of government, which recent changes have expanded and modified, but under which the nation has lived from that day to this. All these will hereafter be recited.

It cannot but be regarded as a fortunate circumstance — fortunate for himself, and for those to whose means of historical study he has made such large and brilliant contributions — that the concluding volume of his History has just been published by Mr. Bancroft, whose relations to this Society have been so intimate ; and that down to the peace of 1782 he has completed his elaborate and shining narrative. The enthusiasm of youth has survived in him, to animate and enhance the acquisitions of age ; and those who read, in their

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own youth, his earlier volumes, and admired alike their strength and polish, will rejoice that his hand has placed the capital upon the tall and fluted shaft. "Worthy deeds," said Milton, "are not often destitute of worthy relators; as by a certain fate, great acts and great eloquence have most commonly gone hand in hand, equaling and honoring each other in the same ages."*

It is, of course, not my purpose to ask your attention to any of the particulars of that remarkable and fascinating history whose jutting outlines I have traced. Next week, at Lexington and at Concord, eloquent voices will open the story. Others will follow, in swift succession, till every field, and each principal fact, has found celebration. My office is merely preparatory to theirs. The subject before me is not picturesque. It hardly admits of any entertaining or graphic treatment. But it nevertheless is of primary importance; and all who follow will have to assume what I would exhibit. There was a certain energizing spirit, an impersonal but inherent and ubiquitous temper, in the people of the colonies, which lay behind their wide and sudden Revolutionary movement; which pushed that movement to unforeseen ends, and which built a Republic where the only result sought at the outset was relief from a tax. Burke discerned this, before it had been exhibited in the field, or had done more than give its own tone to debates and State-papers. From that time on, to the end of the war, it was constantly de-

* Hist. Brit., Book-II.

The Spirit of the people important.

clared — brooding and brightening in the obscurest air, giving Congress its authority, giving conflict its meaning, inspiring leaders, restoring always the shattered and the scanty ranks. It was this invulnerable, inexpugnable force, which no calamities could ever overwhelm, which was sure, from the start, of the ultimate victory.

It is this, and this only, of which the world ever thinks in connection with the time, or of which the permanent history of the country will take much account. The incidents are trivial, except for their relation to this. It surprises us to remember how small were the forces, on either side, in that "valley of decision" in which questions so vital to us, and to mankind, were submitted to the arbitrament of battle; that Burgoyne's army numbered at its surrender less than six thousand English and German troops, and had never contained more than eight thousand, with an uncertain contingent of Canadians and Indians; that at Camden, Gates had but six thousand men, only one-fourth of them Continentals, and Cornwallis but two thousand; that the force which capitulated at Yorktown was but seven thousand; and that the whole number of troops sent from England to this country, during the entire continuance of the war, was less than a hundred and thirteen thousand.

Compare these numbers with those of the large and disciplined armies which Frederick II., twenty years earlier, encountered at Rossbach and at Leuthen;

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compare them with those which, thirty years after, swarmed forth from France, under Napoleon,—and they are the small dust of the balance. Compare them with those of France, on the one hand, or of Germany on the other, in their tremendous unfinished duel, and the largest battles in which our fathers took part seem skirmishes of outposts. Nay, compare them with the forces, from the North and the South, which fought each other in our late civil war, and the Revolutionary musters become nearly imperceptible.

It was the spirit behind the forces, which wielded the instruments, and compelled the events, which gave these any importance in history. Impalpable, indestructible, omnipresent in activity, self-perpetuating, there was this vital impersonal temper, common to many, superior to all, which wrought and fought, from first to last, in the Congress, on the field. In some respects it was a unique force, without precise parallel among peoples, breaking in unexpectedly on the courses of history. A more or less clear recognition of the fact has given to that time its relative prominence before mankind. A distinct apprehension of the nature of the force so victoriously revealed, is necessary to show how the Revolution became as complete and fruitful as it was, and how that small American struggle, going on in a country remote and recent, and succeeded by events incomparably more striking, has taken its place among the significant and memorable facts in the history of the world.

The Colonists plain people.

What was that force, then? and whence did it come? If I mistake not, it was ampler in its sources, more abundant, more secular, and more various in its energy, than we have often been wont to conceive.

There was certainly nothing of the ideal-heroic among the ante-Revolutionary people of this country. They did not live for sentiment, or on it. They were not *doctrinaires*, though they are sometimes so represented; and nothing could have been further from their plans than to make themselves champions of what did not concern them, or to go crusading for fanciful theories and imaginary prizes. They were, for the most part, intelligent, conscientious, God-fearing people—at least those were such who gave tone to their communities, and the others either accepted the impression, or achieved the imitation, of their governing spirit. But they were plain, practical people, almost wholly of the middle-class, who lived, for the most part, by their own labor, who were intent on practical advantages, and who rejoiced in conquering the wilderness, in making the marsh into a meadow, in sucking by their fisheries of the abundance of the seas, and in seeing the first houses of logs, with mud mortar, and oiled paper for glass in the windows, giving place to houses of finished timber, or imported brick, with sometimes even mahogany balustrades.

When the descendants of the settlers at the mouth of the Piscataqua, replied to a reproof of one of their ministers, that the design of their fathers in coming

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thither had not been simply to cultivate religion, but also largely to trade and catch fish, they undoubtedly represented a spirit which had been common along the then recent American coast.* The Plymouth Colony was exceptional in its character. To a large extent, the later and wealthier Massachusetts Colony was animated by sovereign religious considerations; and so were those of Rhode Island and Connecticut. But they are certainly right who affirm that even these men, or many of them, showed a tough and persistent secular enterprise combining with their religious zeal. It was indeed an indispensable element to the soundness of their character. It kept them from wide fanatical excesses. It made them hardy, sagacious, indefatigable, inflexible in their hold on the fields and the freedoms which they had won.

As compared with our more recent pioneers, who have peopled the territories, subdued the mountains, and opened toward Asia the Golden Gate, the religious element was certainly more prominent in those who earliest came to this country. But even they were far from being blind to material advantages, and far enough from being willing to live as idle enthusiasts. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," was their constant prayer; with an emphasis upon "poverty." They meant to worship God according to their consciences; and woe be to him who should forbid! But they meant, also, to get what of comfort and enjoyment

* Adams' Annals of Portsmouth. Page 94.

Misconception of the Colonists easy.

they could, and of physical possession, from the world in which they worshipped; and they felt themselves co-workers with God, when the orchard was planted, and the wild vine tamed; when the English fruits had been domesticated, under the shadow of savage forests, and the maize lifted its shining ranks upon the fields that had been barren; when the wheat and rye were rooted in the valleys, and the grass was made to grow upon the mountains.

It is easy, of course, to heighten the common, to magnify the rare and superior virtues, of men to whom we owe so much. Time itself assists to this, as it makes the mosses and lichens grow on ancient walls, disguising with beauty the rent and ravage. It is easy to exaggerate their religious enthusiasm, till all the other traits of their character are dimmed by its excessive brightness. Our filial pride inclines us to this; for, if we could, we should love to feel, all of us, that we are sprung from untitled nobles, from saints who needed no canonization, from men of such heroic mould, and women of such tender devoutness, that the world elsewhere was not worthy of them; that they brought to these coasts a wholly unique celestial life, through the scanty cabins which were to it as a manger, and the quaint apparel which furnished its swaddling-clothes; that airs Elysian played around them, while they took the wilderness, as was said of the Lady Arbella Johnson, "on their way to heaven."

I cannot so read their history. Certainly, I should

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be the last in this assembly to say any word—in whatever haste, in whatever inadvertence—in disparagement of those who, with a struggle that we never have paralleled and can scarcely comprehend, planted firmly the European civilization upon these shores. I remember the hardness which they endured, and shame be to me, if, out of the careless luxury of our time, I say an unworthy word of those who faced for us the forest and the frost, the Indian and the wolf, the gaunt famine and the desolating plague. I remember that half the Plymouth colonists died the first winter, and that in the spring, when the long-waiting *Mayflower* sailed again homeward, not one of the fainting survivors went with her,—and I glory in that unflinching fortitude which has given renown to the sandy shore! Our vigor is flaccid, our grasp uncertain, our stiffest muscle is limp and loose, beside the unyielding grapple of their tough wills.

But what I do say is, that the figures of even the eminent among them were not so colossal as they sometimes appear, through the transfiguring mists of Time; that of culture, as we know it, they for the most part had enjoyed very little; that even in character they were consciously far from being perfect. They were plain people, hard-working, Bible-reading, much in earnest, with a deep sense of God in them, and a thorough detestation of the devil and his works; who had come hither to get a fresh and large opportunity for work and life; who were here set in cir-

The Colonists transferring great forces.

cumstances which gave stimulus to their energy, and brought out their peculiar and masterful forces. But they were not, for the most part, beyond their associates across the seas in force or foresight; and they left behind them many their peers, and some their superiors, in the very qualities which most impress us. "Not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty,"—then, as aforesaid, that was true of those whom God called. The common people, with their pastors and guides, had come to the woods, to labor, and prosper, and hear God's word. And upon them He put the immense honor of building here a temple and a citadel, whose walls we mark, whose towers we count, and to which the world has since resorted.

But it is, also, always to be remembered that the early settlers of this country were not of one stock merely, but of several; and that all of them came out of communities which had had to face portentous problems, and which were at the time profoundly stirred by vast moral and political forces. They were themselves impregnated with these forces. They bore them imbedded in their consciousness; entering, whether articulately or not, with a dominant force into their thought, into their life. They transported to these coasts, by the simple act of transferring their life hither, a power and a promise from the greatest age of European advancement. They could not have helped it, if they would. They could more easily have left behind the speech which they had learned in child-

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hood, than they could have dropped, on their stormy way across the ocean, the self-reliance, the indomitable courage, the constructive energy, and the great aspiration, of which the lands they left were full.

This, it seems to me, is hardly recognized as clearly and widely as it should be: that the public life of a magnificent age—a life afterward largely, for a time, displaced in Europe, by succeeding reactions—was brought to this continent, from different lands, under different languages, by those who settled it; that it was the powerful and moulding initial force in our civilization; and that here it survived, from that time forward, shaping affairs, erecting institutions, and making the Nation what it finally came to be.

They may not themselves have been wholly aware of what they brought. There was nothing in the outward circumstance of their action to make it distinguished. They had no golden or silver censers in which to transport the undecaying and costly flame. They brought it as fire is sometimes carried, by rough hands, in hollow reeds. But they brought it, nevertheless; and here it dwelt, sheltered and fed, till a continent was illumined by it. Let us think of this a little. Let some rapid suggestions call up to us the times, the new and unmeasured energies of which swept out to this continent, when the colonists came; all the forces of which—political, social, and not merely religious—found here their enlarging arena.

At the time of the seizure of New Netherland by

Elements of the Population.

the English, in 1664, the main elements of the population, afterward composing the thirteen colonies, were already on these shores. Subsequent arrivals brought increase of numbers, except in New England, where the English immigration was then at its end. Important colonies, as Pennsylvania and Georgia, date their existence from a time more recent. But the principal nationalities of northern and north-western Europe, from which our early population was derived, had already representatives here; and what followed contributed rather to the increase than to the change of that population. It was said, you know, that eighteen languages were spoken before then in the thriving village which Stuyvesant surrendered, and which is now this swarming metropolis;* and we certainly know that Englishmen, Dutchmen, Swedès, Germans, French Huguenots, Scotch Presbyterians, Quakers, and Catholics, were at that time upon the American coast.

From that point, then, it is well to look back, and see what was the governing spirit, the diffused and moulding moral life, which the steady immigration of sixty years, back to the date of the building of Jamestown, had been bringing hither. For these sixty years, in

* This surprising statement appears to have been first made as early as 1643, by the Director-General Kieft, to Father Jogues, the Jesuit Priest, escaped from the Iroquois, who was then his guest. It was afterward repeated by Father Jogues, in his Description of New Netherland.

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comparison with the hundred and ten which followed, were like the first twenty-five years in one's personal life, compared with the fifty which succeed. They gave the direction, projected the impulse, prescribed the law, of the subsequent development; and they, of course, surpass in importance any other equal period, in showing how the nation came at last to be what it was. But these sixty years, also, were vitally connected with the forty or fifty which had gone before them; since in those had been born, and morally trained, the men and women who subsequently came hither. Out of those had come the vivifying forces which the settlers at Jamestown, and they who came later, transferred to this continent. We shall not have reached the top-roots of our history, till we have gone back to their beginning.

Look back, then, from the surrender of New Amsterdam, to the date of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, in 1558—less than fifty years before Jamestown began, little more than fifty years before Adrian Block built on this island its first small ship,* and named it "The Restless,"—and you have before you

* This was in 1614; but another ship had been previously constructed on the coast. "Mr. Cooper, in his *Naval History*, speaks of Block's yacht as 'the first decked vessel built within the old United States.' But the honor of precedence in American naval architecture must fairly be yielded to Popham's unfortunate colony on the Kennebec. The 'Virginia,' of Sagadahoc, was the first European-built vessel within the original thirteen States. The 'Restless,' of Manhattan, was the pioneer craft of New York."

Brodhead's *Hist. of New York*. Vol. I., page 55. (Note.)

A remarkable Century.

the remarkable century, out of which had broken the settlements on these shores, at the end of which they all had passed under British supremacy. That was the birth-time of our public life. From its great spirit, from its energetic and vivid experience, fell a splendor and a power on the embryo people which finally became the American Nation.

It was a munificent, a heroical century; in which, for the first time, the immense vigor of popular enthusiasm entered decisively into national development, and forced acceptance from statesmen and kings; which was, accordingly, the boldest in plan, the widest in work, the most replete with constructive energy, which up to that time had been known in Europe. Fruitful schemes, strenuous struggles, extraordinary genius, amazing achievement, the decay of authority, the swift advance of popular power—these so crowd the annals of it that no brief narrative could give a summary of them. Long repressed tendencies came to sudden culmination. Hidden forces found vast development. The exuberant and out-breaking energies of Christendom could no more be restrained within ancient limitations, than the lightnings, elaborated in hidden chambers of earth and sky, can be locked in the clouds from which they leap.

The invention of the movable type, a hundred years earlier, at Harlem or at Maintz, had made books the possession of many, where manuscripts had been the luxury of the few. Knowledge was distributed, and

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thought was interchanged, on this new vehicle, with a freedom, to a breadth, before unknown. The founding of libraries, the enlargement of universities, had given opportunity for liberal studies; and the ancient world drew nearer to the modern, as the elegant letters of Greece and Rome made the genius and the action again familiar with which their times had been illustrious. At the same time, the discovery of this continent had expanded the globe to the minds of Europeans, and had opened new areas, the more exciting because undefined, to their enterprise and hope. The popular imagination, in the early part of that age, was stirred by tales of sea-faring adventure as it had never been by the wildest fiction. The air was full of romance and wonder, as savage forests, dusky figures, feathered crests, ornaments of barbaric gold, strange habitations, unheard-of populations, were lifted before the gaze of Europe, along the new Western horizon. Almost nothing appeared incredible. Grotius himself, scholar, jurist, statesman as he was, cautious by nature, and trained in courts, was inclined to believe in an arctic race whose heads grew beneath their shoulders. El Dorado was to Raleigh as real a locality as the duchy of Devon. Even Caliban and Puck seemed almost possible persons, in an age so full of astounding revelations.

But neither the magical art of printing, nor the discovery of the transatlantic continent, had stirred with such tumultuous force the mind of Christendom as

Influence of the Reformation.

had the sudden Reformation of religion, starting in Germany, and swiftly extending through Northern Europe. To those who accepted it, this seemed a revival of Divine revelations. It brought the Most High to immediate personal operation upon them. As in the old prophetic days, the voice of speech came echoing forth, from the amber brightness which was as the appearance of the bow in the cloud. The instant privilege, the constant obligation, of every man to come to God, by faith in His Son ; the dignity of that personal nature in man for which this Son of God had died ; the vastness of the promises, whose immortal splendors interpreted the cross ; the regal right of every soul to communion, by the word, with the Spirit by whom that word was given :—these broke, like a flash from heights celestial, not only on the devout and the studious, but over the common life of nations.

Before the force so swiftly and supremely inspired, whatever resisted it had to give way. It not only released great multitudes of men into instant independence of the ancient dominant spiritual authority. It loosened the ligatures, or shattered the strength, of temporal tyrannies ; and its impulses went more widely than its doctrines. In Italy and Spain, as well as in England, in the parts of Germany which retained their ancient allegiance to the Pontiff, as well as in those which had thrown this off, there was an unwonted stimulation in the air ; and the forces, of learning,

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of logic, or of arms, which fought against the Reformation, were themselves more eager and more effective because of the impulse which it had given.

Commerce was extending, as letters and liberties were thus advancing. Inventions followed each other almost as swiftly, with almost as much of startling novelty, as in our own time; and the ever-increasing consciousness of right, of opportunity, and of power, the sense of liberation, the expectation of magnificent futures—these extended among the peoples, with a rapidity, in a measure, before unknown.

It was an age, therefore, not so much of destruction, as of paramount impulse to wide and bold enterprise. Vast hopes, vast works, imperial plans, were native to it. It was an age of detonating strife, but of study, too, and liberal thought; of the noblest poetry, the most copious learning, a busy industry, a discursive philosophy, a sagacious statesmanship; when astonishing discovery stimulated afresh magnificent enterprise; when great actions crowded upon each other; when the world seemed to have suddenly turned plastic, and to offer itself for man's rebuilding; when each decade of years, to borrow an energetic expression of Brougham, "staggered, under a load of events which had formerly made centuries to bend."

So far as the South of Europe is concerned, it is represented to us chiefly, certainly most pleasantly, by the great names, in literature or in fine art, by which it is distinguished; Tasso, crowned at Rome, and

Renowned Men of the Century.

Galileo, condemned ;* Cervantes, Calderon, Lope de Vega, in Spain ; Tintoretto, with his audacity of genius, and the lightning of his pencil ; Cagliari, better known as Paul Veronese, Guido Reni, the Carracci ; Velasquez, Murillo, and Salvator Rosa. It saw the close of Titian's life, and of Michael Angelo's. It saw the completion of the dome of St. Peter's.

In Northern Europe great clusters of names also shine on the century, of men preëminent in science, letters, or the fine arts ; Kepler, Tycho Brahe ; Moliere, Racine, Rochefoucauld, Pascal ; Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Claude Lorraine. Edmund Spenser, the 'Prince of Poets,' as his monument describes him, filled his career in it ; Richard Hooker, Philip Sidney, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, John Selden, Isaac Casaubon. It bears upon its brow, as it moves in the great procession of historic periods, the dazzling diadem of the name of Shakespeare. It saw the youth of Leibnitz, and of Newton. It heard the music of Milton's verse. It saw the entire life of Descartes, the middle manhood of Spinoza. It watched Grotius from his birth to his burial, in the city of Delft.

* The traveler to Rome, visiting the church of S. MARIA SOPRA MINERVA, will hardly fail to feel the propriety of its name, if it is recalled to him that in one of the halls of the monastery attached to it, then occupied by the Inquisition, Galileo met his sentence, and pronounced his retraction : " I abjure, curse, and detest, the error and the heresy of the motion of the earth," etc. It startles one to remember that this was at as late a date as June 22, 1633 ; five years before Harvard College was founded. The Inquisition itself has since seen the truth of the more celebrated words which the aged philosopher is said to have uttered, in an under tone, when rising from his knees.

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The telescope came to light in it; and brought to men's view vast whirls of suns, as if re-creating for them the heavens. The microscope was so perfected as to carry the sight, almost without exaggeration, from the infinitely great to the infinitely little, and to show the marvels of organization in creatures so minute that a speck of dust is a mountain beside them. The thermometer, the barometer, the air-pump, the nature and use of electricity, the circulation of the blood—these are among its great discoveries. The mariner's compass was improved and illumined till it became almost a new instrument. The first English newspaper had its origin in this century. Logarithms were invented. The Royal Exchange was opened in London. The Dutch and English East India Companies were established. The globe was explored on every meridian, by the search of its discovery. It gained new luxuries, as well as new arts, and was the first century sweetened in Europe by the manufacture of refined sugar, or soothed and stimulated by tobacco and coffee.

Things like these are the surface indications of prodigious forces working beneath; like the specks or wreaths of glittering spume which are flung into the air, when immense currents rush into collision. But the intensity and the breadth of these forces are better represented by the national changes which the century witnessed.

To look only at the states of Northern Europe, it

Changes in Nations.

saw the magnificent reign of Elizabeth, the great English Rebellion, the execution of Charles First, the ten years of the Commonwealth, the final return of Charles Second. It saw the Huguenot struggle in France, the stormy youth and the brilliant government of Henry Fourth, the following reign of Louis Thirteenth, the earlier successes of Louis Fourteenth; the long ministry of Sully, on whom Henry leaned with such justified confidence; the triumph of Richelieu, who broke the power of feudalism on the one hand, of political protestantism on the other, and who "made his royal master," as Montesquieu said, "the second man in France, but the first in Europe; humbling the king, while he exalted the monarchy." It saw the ministry, the marriage, and the death, of Cardinal Mazarin.

The forty years' reign of Philip Second filled nearly half of it. It witnessed the amazing revolt of the Netherlands, their successful resistance of all the Spanish fleets and forces, their final establishment of a Protestant Republic. It saw the regeneration of Sweden; and it included, in its extraordinary and comprehensive annals, the whole course of the Thirty Years' War, with the sorrow and sacrifice which that involved, the heroic energies which it revealed, till it closed in the welcome peace of Westphalia.

Another century so energized by great emergent opinions, so suddenly full of a vehement and conquering public life, so prolific in enterprise, so swarming

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with productive force, one must look long to find. When we reach it in history we are conscious of stepping out of the Past, into the modern life of Christendom. The patience, skill, inventive daring, of our civilization, were more vitally a part of it than were its longest and fiercest conflicts. It fought, to get more room for work. Elemental rages darkened the heavens. The concussion of ethereal forces was constant. Yet the work of construction went always forward, and on the broadest national scale. New liberties were asserted and organized. New states came rounding into form. The descendants of the Batavians made the scanty lands which they had rescued from the wash of the sea, the seat of a history more majestic in its elements, both of tragedy and of triumph, than the Continent had seen, and the centre of a commerce which flung its tentacles around the globe. The English fleets, in which Catholic and Protestant fought together, scattered the Armada, under skies that seemed to conspire for their help, and hit, as with ceaseless lightning strokes, the ships, and coasts, and power of Spain; while all the time went widely on, with only indeed augmented impulse, the labor of inventors, the studies of scholars, the voyages of discoverers, the theologian's discussion, the painter's pencil, and the statesman's plan.

So full of immense movement was the century, so opulent in achievement, so mighty in impulse, that the earth seemed freshly alive beneath it, the skies

Northern Europe full of life.

burnished with prophetic gleams. The common people, for a time at least, had mastered their place in politics and society; and the whole mind of Northern Europe was full of an intense stimulation. Education was wide. Plain men, like Governor Bradford, never trained in any university, were easy masters of five or six languages.* Farmers' sons, like Francis Drake, became great admirals. The enterprise of the time was not reckless or vague, but was the expression of this abounding, exuberant life, instructed by research, and guided by courageous wisdom. There was nothing factitious in the force of the century, as there is nothing deceptive in its fame. Alive in every fibre, with an exultant and stimulated life, Northern Europe sent forth its freshly-awakened, world-sweeping activities, as streams are shot into sudden motion when the Easter sun unlocks the ice.

This was the century out of the midst of which the early settlers of this continent came; whose eager energies came here with them. They were not its splendid representatives. No fleets of galleons brought them over. They came in coarse clothing, not in raiment of velvet, or gilded armor. They attracted

* "He was a person for study, as well as action; and hence, notwithstanding the difficulties through which he passed in his youth, he attained unto a notable skill in languages: the Dutch tongue was become almost as vernacular to him as the English; the French tongue he could also manage; the Latin, and the Greek, he had mastered; but the Hebrew he most of all studied, 'because,' he said, 'he would see with his own eyes the ancient oracles of God in their native beauty.'"

Mather's *Magnalia*. Book 2, Chap. I., § 9.

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little attention at the time. They only seemed to themselves to be doing a work which somehow had fallen to their lot, and which must be done; and that the century which they represented would be more illustrious by reason of their action, was certainly a thought which never occurred to them. But they shared its life, if not its renown; they brought its vigor, if not its wealth. Their small stockades, at Jamestown and Plymouth, at New Amsterdam and Fort Orange, were the points on our coast where that energetic and sovereign century, then passing over Europe, set up its banners.

We never shall understand them, or their work, except this be before us.

Recall, then, the England which the colonists left and represented. Elizabeth herself had been dead four years when they landed at Jamestown, and seventeen years when they settled at Plymouth; but the image of her imperious face was on most of the coins which they brought hither, and the memories of her reign had a force more vital than the actual power of her successor. The middle-aged could well remember the camps, the watch-fires, the universal excitements, of the year of the Armada. The young might have read, upon broad-sheets, her "Golden Speech" to her last Parliament.* The older might have sailed with

* "There seemed for a moment to be some danger that the long and glorious reign of Elizabeth would have a shameful and disastrous end. She, however, with admirable judgment and temper, declined the contest, put herself at the head of the reforming party, redressed the grievance,

The Reaction in England.

Frobisher or Drake, or themselves have borne arms under the famous admirals and captains, who, at her inspiration, had fought with a triumphant energy on sea and land.

The very temper which now strove to displace that earlier spirit only contributed to make it signal. Raleigh was beheaded October 29th, 1618; eleven years after Jamestown commenced, two years before the Mayflower's voyage. That was the last passionate blow of the vanquished Spain at the age of Elizabeth, whose energy and whose chivalry he represented. It showed the unsleeping animosity of the Spaniard; but it also brought into startling exhibition the weakness and wickedness which were now on the throne from which the great daughter of Anne Boleyn had lately passed; and the spatter of his blood smote every heart, which was loyal to the Past, with pain and rage. Carlyle has suggested that Oliver Cromwell was perhaps at that time living in London, a student of law, and may have been a spectator of the scene. Many others, who were afterward in this country, must have seen the gallant and cultured man whose youthful grace had attracted Elizabeth, and whose life had imaged the splendor of the age; and a sharp sense of

thanked the Commons, in touching and dignified language, for their tender care of the general weal, brought back to herself the hearts of the people, and left to her successors a memorable example of the way in which it behoves a ruler to deal with public movements which he has not the means of resisting."

Macaulay: Hist. of England. Vol. I., page 63.

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the Nemesis in history may well have startled them when the son and successor of the royal assassin bowed his reluctant and haughty head beneath the axe, in front of Whitehall.

The daring and inspiring spirit which had marked the preceding half-century was not destroyed, by the murder of one of its representatives, or by the treachery of another. A year after the landing at Plymouth, Thomas Wentworth, afterward known as Earl of Strafford, that 'great, brave, bad man,' whom Macaulay has pictured with a pencil so exquisite and so unrelenting, declared in Parliament, with vehement emphasis, that "the liberties, franchises, privileges, and jurisdictions of Parliament, are the ancient and undoubted birthright and inheritance of the subjects of England." That was then a passionate conviction in the House of Commons. Twenty years later, when he who then uttered it had been for twelve years its fierce antagonist, it caught him in its grasp, and swept him to the scaffold. The pre-Revolutionary struggle of our fathers had its prophecy in that sentence. Its seminal principle involved their whole contest.

Before the Pilgrims sailed from Holland, he whom Elizabeth, forty years before, in the superb promise of his youth, had called her "young Lord Keeper," was Chancellor of England. His "Novum Organum" might have come to our shores with Bradford and Carver; his later writings with Winthrop and Higginson. His immense influence on human thought syn-

Shakespeare, and Milton.

chronises completely with the English settlements on our coast. The then new English version of the Scriptures was just in time to gild with its lights, of Hebrew story and Christian faith, the rude life on savage shores. Shakespeare had died, untimely, in 1616; and the first collected edition of his plays was published in the year of the settlement of this city. How far the impulse and renown of his genius had preceded his death we cannot be sure; but the children of those who had never read, who certainly had not seen his plays at the Blackfriars' or the Globe, have been debtors ever since to that supreme and visioned mind which reanimated the past, interpreted history, and searched the invisible spirit of man as if it were transparent crystal. Milton was a lad, twelve years old, when the Plymouth colony began, having been born, in 1608, in Bread street, London, under the armorial sign of the "Spread Eagle;" and his public life was wholly accomplished within the period now under review, though it was not till later that the "Paradise Lost" was published in London, and the chequered and lofty life of the poet was closed in sleep.

These names make the age which presents them majestic. But their chief importance to us, at this moment, is derived from the fact that they represent a popular life which preceded themselves, and which quickened the personal genius that surpassed it. The authors were the fountain-shafts, through which shot up, in flashing leap, the waters flowing from distant

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heights. With the various beauty, the incomparable force, of their differing minds, they gave expression to impalpable influences of which the age itself was full.

The same influences wrought in humbler men, who could not give them such expression. They were the vital inheritance of our fathers. The men of the English middle-class,—they were the men from the loins of whose peers, and whose possible associates, Raleigh, and Shakespeare, and Milton, had sprung. They could not, many of them, read the Latin of the “*De Augmentis*.” They might not appreciate the cosmic completeness of Shakespeare’s mind, or the marvellous beauty of *Comus* and *L’Allegro*. But they incorporated, more than others, the essential spirit of that prolific, prophetic age, which had found its voice in these supreme writers. They had breathed from infancy that invigorating air which was full of discovery, enterprise, hope, of widened learning, popular enthusiasm, a fresh and vivid Christian faith. They had felt the inrush of that vehement life which for sixty years had been sweeping over England; and the irrepressible temper of the time, which gave birth to the letters, impulse to the discovery, law to the statesmanship, life to the religion, of the age of Elizabeth, was as much a part of them as their bones and their blood.

They came, in large part, because they represented that spirit; because it seemed to them likely thenceforth to be less common and governing in England; and because they would rather encounter the seas, and

The Dutch, and Walloons.

face the perils and pains of the wilderness, than tarry in a country where James was king, and George Villiers was minister. When Endicott cut out the cross at Salem from the banner of England, he expressed a temper as old and as stubborn as the fights against Spain. When Wadsworth, fifty years later, seized the charter of Connecticut, and hid it in the Wyllys' oak, he did precisely what the English traditions of a century earlier had enjoined as his duty. And when the discerning Catholics of Maryland accepted religious freedom in their colony, they only expressed anew the spirit in which their fathers had fought the Armada, though the pontiff had blessed it, in their loyalty to a Queen against whom he had proclaimed a crusade.

It is never to be forgotten that that wonderful century, which saw at its beginning the coronation of Elizabeth, and at its end the death of Cromwell—the age of Grenville, Raleigh, Drake, of Bacon, Shakespeare, and the manhood of Milton—that was the century, in which the arts and arms of England, its resolute temper, and its sagacious and liberal life, were solidly planted upon these shores.

The powerful element brought from Holland, by the Dutch and the Walloons, was only the counterpart of this. An eminent American has made it familiar, in our time, to all who admire heroism in action, and eloquence in story.

Mr. Motley has said of William the Silent, that

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“ his efforts were constant to elevate the middle-class ; to build up a strong third party, which should unite much of the substantial wealth and intelligence of the land, drawing constantly from the people, and deriving strength from national enthusiasm,—a party which should include nearly all the political capacity of the country ; and his efforts were successful.” * “ As to the grandees, they were mostly of those who sought to ‘ swim between two waters,’ according to the Prince’s expression.” The boers, or laborers, were untrained and coarse, not the material with which to erect an enduring commonwealth ; and on this stalwart middle-class, trained by churches and common-schools, skillful in enterprise, patient in industry, fervent in patriotism, unconquerable in courage, the illustrious patriot depended, under God, for the safety of his country.

Among the inhabitants of the province of New Netherland, when it came into the English possession, were many representing this class. The early servants of the West India Company had been succeeded by farmers and traders. The patroons of the vast and indefinite manors had, for the most part, tarried at home, and their titles had largely been extinguished. The colonists then here,—agriculturists, mechanics, sailors, dealers—represented fairly the commercial, political, social spirit, which was prevalent in Holland ; and while wolves and Indians filled the forests, which then extended from Canal Street to Harlem, the life

* Rise of the Dutch Republic. Vol. III., page 219.

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in the two separated settlements was much the same as in the equal contemporaneous villages of the Fatherland. Maurice—for whom the Hudson River had first been named—was Stadtholder of the Netherlands, when the permanent settlement was made here; and the clouded lustre of his great name was still vivid with a gleam from the past. Only two years before, the contest with Spain had re-commenced. During the preceding twelve years' armistice, the United Netherlands had passed through a disastrous interval, of religious dissension, ambitious intrigue, and popular tumult. But that was now ended; and the first stroke of the Spanish arms, under Spinola, had revived the magnificent tradition of the days when, as their historian has said, "the provinces were united in one great hatred, and one great hope." The interval of peace had not softened the stubbornness of their purpose to be free. They were ready again 'to pass through the sea of blood, that they might reach the promised land;' and all that was inspiring in the annals of two preceding generations came out to instant exhibition, as hidden pictures are drawn forth by fire.

The earlier years of Maurice himself, when the twig was becoming the tree—"tandem fit surculus arbor;" his following victories, when the renowned Spanish commanders were smitten by him into utter rout, as at Nieuport and at Turnhout; the fatal year of the murder of his father, when the 'nation lost its guiding-star, and the little children cried in the streets;' the

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frightful "Spanish fury" at Antwerp; the siege of Leyden, and the young university which commemorated the heroism of those who had borne it; the siege of Harlem, and all the rage and agony of its close:—these things came up, and multitudes more—the whole panorama in which these were incidents—when the Spaniards sought, in 1622, to open the passage into the North by capturing the town of Bergen-op-Zoom, and when Maurice relieved it. The temper which this tremendous experience, so intense and prolonged, had bred in the Hollanders—the omnipresent, indestructible spirit, not wholly revealed in any one person, but partly in millions—this was again as vigorous as ever, throughout the Republic which it had created, when the thirty families came to this island, when the two hundred persons were resident here, in 1625.

Some of those then here, more who followed, were of the same class, the same occupation and habit of life, with those who had fought for sixty years, on sea and land, against the frenzied assaults of Spain; who, under Heemskirk, had smitten her fleet into utter destruction, beneath the shadow of Gibraltar; who had fought her ships on every wave, and had blown up their own rather than let her flag surmount them; who had more than once opened the dykes, and welcomed the sea, rather than yield to the Spanish possession the lands thus drowned; who had ravaged the coasts, and captured the colonies, of the haughty Peninsula; and who, in the midst of all this whirlwind of

Education in the Netherlands.

near and far battle, had been inaugurating new forms of Government, cultivating religion, advancing education, developing the arts, draining the lakes, and organizing a commerce that surrounded the world.

When the four Dutch forts were established—at this point, at Harlem, at Fort Orange, on the Delaware,—this spirit was simply universal in Holland; and those who came hither could not but bring it, unless they had dropped their identity on the way. They came for trade. They came to purchase lands by labor; to get what they could from the virgin soil, and send peltries and timber back to Holland. But they brought the patience, the enterprise and the courage, the indomitable spirit, and the hatred of tyranny, into which they had been born, into which their nation had been baptized with blood.

Education came with them; the free schools, in which Holland had led the van of the world, being early transplanted to these shores; a Latin school being established here in 1659, to which scholars were sent from distant settlements.* An energetic Christian faith came with them, with its Bibles, its ministers, its interpreting books. Four years before, Grotius, imprisoned in the castle of Louvestein, had

* “It is very pleasant to reflect that the New England pilgrims, during their residence in the glorious country of your ancestry, found already established there a system of schools which John of Nassau, eldest brother of William the Silent, had recommended in these words: ‘You must urge upon the States General that they should establish free schools, where children of quality, as well as of poor families, for a very small sum, could be well and Christianly educated and brought up. This

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written his notes upon the Scriptures, and that treatise on the Truth of the Christian Religion, which, within the same century, was translated from the original Dutch into Latin, English, French, Flemish, German, Swedish, Persian, Arabic, the language of Malacca, and modern Greek. He had written it, he says, for the instruction of sailors; that they might read it in the leisure of the voyage, as he had written it in the leisure of confinement, and might carry the impression of that Christianity whose divinity it affirmed, around the globe. Copies of it may easily have come hither in the vessels of the nation which had no forests, but which owned more ships than all Europe beside.

The political life of the Hollanders had come, as well as their commercial spirit, and their decisive religious faith. They loved the liberty for which they and their fathers had tenaciously fought. They saw its utilities, and understood its conditions; and if you recall the motto of the Provinces, in their earlier struggle—“*Concordia, res parvæ crescunt; Discordia, maximæ dilabuntur*”—and if you add a pregnant sentence from their Declaration of Independence, made in July, 1581, I think you will have some fair impression of the influences which afterward wrought in this

would be the greatest and most useful work you could ever accomplish, for God and Christianity, and for the Netherlands themselves.’ . . . This was the feeling about popular education in the Netherlands, during the 16th century.”

Mr. Motley’s Letter to St. Nicholas Society; quoted in Address of Hon. J. W. Beekman, 1869, pp. 30, 31.

Declaration of Independence.

land, transported hither by those colonists. "When the Prince," says that Declaration, "does not fulfil his duty as protector, when he oppresses his subjects, destroys their ancient liberties, and treats them as slaves, he is to be considered not a Prince, but a Tyrant. As such, the Estates of the land may lawfully and reasonably depose him, and elect another in his place."* They did not elect another to the place; but, renouncing their allegiance to Philip, as their children did afterward to George Third, they founded a Republic, which lasted on those oozy plains two hundred years.

The very temper which afterward spoke in the public documents issued from Philadelphia, had been uttered in Holland two centuries earlier; and they who came hither from that land of dykes, storks, and windmills, had brought it as part of their endowment. No master-pieces came with them, of Rubens or Rembrandt, whose genius flourished in the same century, under the skies lurid with battle, and on the soil fattened with blood. No wealth came with them, like that which already was making Amsterdam—"the Venice of the North"—one of the richest towns in Europe. They built a stone chapel, in 1642†; but they could not reproduce on these shores a single one of the scores of churches, stately and ancient, which they had left, nor

* Rise of Dutch Republic. Vol. III., page 509.

† "A contract was made with John and Richard Ogden, of Stamford, for the mason-work of a stone church, seventy-two feet long, fifty wide, and sixteen high, at a cost of twenty-five hundred guilders, and a gratuity of one hundred more if the work should be satisfactory. The walls were

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any of those superb civic palaces in which the Netherland cities were rich. But amid whatever straitness of poverty, amid whatever simplicity of manners, however unconscious of it themselves, they brought the immanent moral life which had made the morasses at the mouth of the Rhine the centre of a traffic more wide and lucrative, the scene of a history more majestic, than Europe before had ever seen, and the seat of the first enlightened Republic on all the circuit of its maritime coast.

To these two elements, the English and the Dutch, was added a vivid and graceful force by those who came from the fruitful Protestant provinces of France. It is sometimes forgotten that the Huguenots constituted the larger and wealthier part of the population of New Amsterdam, after the Dutch; so that La Montaigne had been in a measure associated with Kieft in the government here, as early as 1638; so that public documents, before 1664, were ordered to be printed in the French language, as well as in the Dutch. They brought with them industry, arts, refinement of letters, as well as the faithful and fervent spirit which had been infused into them in the *chambres ardentes* of their long persecutions.

They were, probably, more generally a cultivated class than were the colonists from either England or

soon built; and the roof was raised, and covered by English carpenters with oak shingles, which, by exposure to the weather, soon 'looked like slate.'"

Brodhead's Hist. of New York. Vol. I., pp. 336-7.

Huguenot movement in France.

Holland. The Huguenot movement had begun in France, not among the poorer people, but in the capital, and in the university. The revival of letters had given it primary impulse. It was scholastic, as well as devout, and so was fitly signaled and served by the most philosophical system of theology elaborated in Europe. Its ministers were among the most learned and eloquent in that country and century of eloquent preachers. It had counted distinguished nobles in its ranks; Condé, and Coligni, among its leaders. Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, had been in her time the centre of it. It was intimately connected with the high politics of the realm. It had control of abundant wealth. The commerce of the kingdom, and its finest manufactures, were largely in the hands of those who composed the eight hundred Huguenot churches found in France in the early part of the seventeenth century.

The families of this descent who were early in New York—some of them as early as 1625—and who were afterward in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, South Carolina, brought with them thus an ancestral influence of education, refinement, and skillful enterprise, as well as of religious fidelity. The French vivacity blended in them with a quick and careful sense of duty. They brought new arts, and graceful industries, a certain chivalric and cultivated tone; while the right to freedom, in the worship of God, and in the conduct of civil affairs, was as dear to them as to any of those whose fortunes they shared. This spirit had compelled respect

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in the land which they left, from those who hated it most intensely. For nearly ninety years it had made it indispensable to maintain there the edict which secured to them religious rights. When that was repealed, with the frightful dragonnades which met such ghastly retribution in the streets of Paris, a hundred years after, half-a-million of the citizens of France pushed across its guarded frontiers into voluntary exile, while the fiery spirit of those who remained blazed forth in the war of the Camisards, unextinguished among the Cevennes for twenty years.

Such an element of population was powerful, here, beyond its numbers. Its trained vitality made it efficient. It is a familiar fact that of the seven Presidents of the Continental Congress, three were of this Huguenot lineage: Boudinot, Laurens, and John Jay. Of the four commissioners who signed the provisional treaty at Paris, which assured our independence, two were of the same number: Laurens, and Jay. Faneuil, whose hall in Boston has been for more than a hundred years the rallying-place of patriotic enthusiasm, was the son of a Huguenot. Marion, the swamp-fox of Carolina, was another; Horry, another; Huger, another. It was a Huguenot voice, that of Duché, which opened with prayer the Continental Congress. It was a Huguenot hand, that of John Laurens, which drew the articles of capitulation at Yorktown. Between these two terminal acts, the brilliant and faithful bravery of the soldier had found wider imitation, among those of

The Swedish Emigration.

his lineage, than had the cowardly weakness of the preacher; and two of those, who thirty years after, in 1814, signed the treaty of peace at Ghent, were still of this remarkable stock—James Bayard, and Albert Gallatin.

Whenever the history of those who came hither from La Rochelle, and the banks of the Garonne, is fully written, the value and the vigor of the force which they imparted to the early American public life will need no demonstration.

The Swedes and Germans, who also were here, though in smaller numbers, represented the same essential temper, and were in radical harmony of spirit with those by whose side they found their place. Gustavus Vasa had given to Sweden comparative order, and initial prosperity; leaving it, at his death, with various industries, a considerable trade, and important institutions of education and religion. Gustavus Adolphus gave to the country thus partially regenerated an eminence as signal as it was brief in European affairs. A typical Northman, with his fair skin, clear gray eyes, and the golden hair which crowned his gigantic stature, he broke upon Germany in the midst of the agony of its Thirty Years' War, beat back the imperial banners from their near approach to the German Ocean, and, in two years of rapid victory, turned the entire current of the strife. He swept fortresses into his grasp, as the reaper binds his sheaves. The armies of Tilly were pulverized before him. He entered Munich

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in triumph; Nuremberg and Naumburg amid a welcome that frightened him, it was so much like worship. And when he died, accidentally killed in the fog at Lützen, in 1632, he left the most signal example in modern times of heroic design, of far-sighted audacity, of the conquering force which lies in faith.

When he left Sweden he said to his chancellor: "Henceforth there remains for me no rest, except the eternal;" and it was true. But, before he left, he had not only founded a university at home, and given large impulse to industry and to commerce, but had chartered a colony for this country, with liberal provision, and an unbounded faith and hope. After his death, the great minister, Oxenstiern—most prescient and masterful of the statesmen of the time—furthered the colony, and would have built it into greatness, but for the subsequent decline of the kingdom, under the eccentric and self-willed Christina. Then it was absorbed, as you know, by the Dutch. But so far as it contributed, as to some extent it did, to the early civilized life on these shores, it simply augmented the previous forces, of personal energy, public education, constructive skill, and a free faith, for which the woods had here retired to make room; and the fact that it was planned by him whose flashing fame filled Europe with amaze, connects it with heroic memories, and casts a certain reflected splendor upon our early popular life.

The Germans, who speedily followed the Swedes,

The German Emigration.

though their large immigration was later in beginning, were of the same spirit. The war, which had covered a whole generation, in which three-fourths of the people had perished, and three-fourths of the houses had been destroyed,—which had given, as Archbishop Trench points out, the new word “plunder” to the English language,* and which had been marked by atrocities so awful that history shudders to recite them,—had not, after all, exterminated the temper at which it was aimed. It had given, as Trench has also observed, the largest contribution of any period to the Protestant hymn-book of Germany. Those who survived it, while fiercer than ever against the tyrannies which they had fought, were more eager than ever to replace the prosperities which the war had destroyed. The wilderness around them, which man had made, was less inviting than the wilderness beyond seas, which God had left for man to conquer. So they came hither; bringing with them the courage, the purpose, and the hope, which all the fire that ran along the ground, and the iron hail that had broken the branches of every tree, had only burned and beaten deeper into their minds.

They came for expanded opportunity; for liberty of development, and the chance of a more rewarding

* “This War has left a very characteristic deposite in our language, in the word ‘plunder,’ which first appeared in English about the year 1642-3, having been brought hither from Germany by some of the many Scotch and English who had served therein; for so Fuller assures us.”

Lect. on “Social Aspects of the Thirty Years’ War.”

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work. Wherever they touched the American coast they set the seeds of that new civilization which had found in Germany its early incentives, and for which they and their fathers had fought, through a strife without precedent in severity and in length.

The same was true of the Scotch and Scotch-Irish, who came in rapidly increasing numbers after the close of the seventeenth century. The Earl of Stirling had received, by royal charter, as early as 1621, a grant of the territory still known to the world as "Nova Scotia," and had subsequently sent some colonists to its shores; but the small settlement soon disappeared, and those who afterward emigrated from Scotland, for many years, were inclined to seek homes in the north of Ireland, rather than on these distant coasts. The comparatively few families from the lowland shires, who had come hither before 1664, had mingled inseparably with the English emigrants, whom they closely resembled, and are scarcely to be discriminated from them.*

The four or five hundred Scotch prisoners whom Cromwell sent to Boston, in 1651, after the battles of Dunbar and Worcester, were, of course, discontented in their involuntary exile, and appear to have left no

* "The population of Scotland (1603), with the exception of the Celtic tribes which were thinly scattered over the Hebrides, and over the mountainous parts of the northern shires, was of the same blood with the population of England, and spoke a tongue which did not differ from the purest English more than the dialects of Somersetshire and Lancashire differed from each other."

Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. 1, page 65.

The Scotch-Irish Emigration.

permanent impression on the unfolding life of the colonies. When Robert Barclay, of Ury, was governor of New Jersey, in 1683, he secured the emigration of numbers of his countrymen to that attractive and fertile province, though, it is said, "with some difficulty and importunity. For, although the great bulk of the nation was suffering the rigors of tyranny, for their resistance to the establishment of prelacy, they were reluctant to seek relief in exile from their native land." *

But when the hundred and twenty families came, in 1719, to Boston, Portland, and elsewhere, the ancestors of whom, a century before, had emigrated from Argyleshire to Londonderry and Antrim in the north of Ireland, and by part of whom Londonderry, in New Hampshire, was speedily settled,—and when others followed, as to Georgia in 1736, to North Carolina in 1746, to South Carolina in 1763,—they came to stay. They changed their skies, but not their minds. They brought the exact and stern fidelity to religious conviction, the national pride, the hatred of tyranny, the frugal, hardy, courageous temper which were to them an ancestral inheritance. Their strong idiosyncrasy maintained itself stubbornly, but their practical spirit was essentially in harmony with that of the colonists who had preceded them; and when the hour of summons came, no voices were earlier or more emphatic for dissolving all connection with Great Britain than

* Gordon's History of New Jersey, chap. IV.

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were those of the men whose ancestors, in 1638, had eagerly signed the "National Covenant" in the Greyfriars' church-yard, or forty years afterward had faced Claverhouse and his dragoons at Loudon-hill, or Monmouth and his troops at Bothwell-bridge.

So, also, the Bohemian protestants, who were here in 1656; the Waldenses, who were on Staten Island and elsewhere in the same year; the German quakers, by whom Germantown, in Pennsylvania, was settled, in 1684; the three thousand Germans, sent out to the Hudson River in 1710, and who afterward established their prosperous homes at Schoharie, and along the inviting Mohawk meadows; the Salzburg exiles, who had crossed Europe from Augsburg "singing psalms," and who finally found a home in Georgia, in 1734:—all were essentially similar in spirit, industrious, orderly, devout, faithful to their religion, with a resolute purpose to live and work in unhindered freedom. Each small migration added its increment to the swelling force of the various but sympathetic population of the colonies. Each element had its separate value, its proper strength; and all were ready, when the final fires of war broke forth, to combine with each other, as the many metals, fused together and intimately commingling, were wrought into one magnificent amalgam, in the famous and precious Corinthian brass.

Even the rough and rapid outline of this fragmentary review illustrates the extent to which the century

The Nation commenced.

passing so signally over Europe impressed its character on this continent. Twenty-five years after New Amsterdam had been submitted to the English, at least two hundred thousand Europeans are computed to have had their home in this country, representing, for the most part, the several peoples which I have named. The future Nation was then fully commenced. It had only thenceforth to work, and grow. It was formed of plain people. Its wealth was small, and its culture not great. It had been hardly noticed, at first, amid the swift changes of states and dynasties with which Europe was dazzled. But the forces which it contained represented an illustrious ancestry. It is no exaggeration to say that the most energetic life of the world, up to that era, was reproduced in it. We have thought of it, too commonly, as composed of men who had simply come here in zeal for an opinion, or to escape the fierce inquest of tyranny. It was a broader temper which brought them, an ampler purpose which they came to serve. The push of a century was behind them; eager, aggressive, sweeping out to new conquests on unknown coasts. It had seen such changes in Northern Europe as only its vehement energy could have wrought; and now, with seemingly careless hand, using the impulse of various motives, it had flung into space a separate people, infused with its temper, alive with its force.

In its constituent moral life, that people was one, though gradually formed, and drawn from regions so

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remote. It was fearless, reflective, energetic, constructive, by its birthright; at once industrious and martial; intensely practical, politically active, religiously free. There was, almost, a monotony of force in it. It accepted no hereditary leaders, and kept those whom it elected within careful limitations. It gave small promise of esthetic sensibility, with the dainty touch of artistic taste; but it showed from the outset a swift and far-sighted common-sense. It was vital with expectation; having the strongest ancestral attachments, yet attracted by the Future more than by the Past, and always looking to new success and larger work. It was hospitable, of course, to all new comers, giving reception in New England, as well as here, to even the Jesuit and his mass; * but it absorbed only what harmonized with it, was indifferent to the rest. It was sensible of God, and His providence over it; but entirely aware of the value of possessions, and profoundly resolved to have the power which they impart. It was the heir to a great Past. It had before it the perilous uncertainties of an obscure Future. But any philosopher, considering it at that point, with a mind as intent and reflective as Burke's, would have said, I think, without hesitation, that its Future must respond to the long preparation; that the times before it must match the times out of which it had come, and take impress from the lands whose tongues and temper it combined. If that strong stock, selected from so

* See Parkman's "Jesuits of North America," pp. 322-327.

The Training of the Nation.

many peoples, and transferred to this continent at that critical time, was not destined thenceforth to grow, till the little one became a thousand, and the small one a strong nation, there is no province for anticipation in public affairs, and "the philosophy of history" is a phrase without meaning.

The after-training which met it here was precisely such, you instantly observe, as befitted its origin, and carried on the development which was prophesied in its nature. It was an austere, protracted training; not beautiful, but beneficent; of labor, patience, legislation, war. As the colonies had been planted according to the wise maxim of Bacon—"the people wherewith you plant ought to be gardeners, ploughmen, laborers, smiths, carpenters, joiners, fishermen, fowlers, with some few apothecaries, surgeons, cooks, and bakers,"*—so they were trained for practical service, for long endurance, for the arts of industry not of beauty, for ultimate oneness as a Nation, and a powerful impression upon mankind.

Incessant labor was their primary teacher; universal in its demands, in effect most salutary. If they had been idle men, supplied with abundant resources from abroad, a something mystical and dark would have penetrated their spirit, from the pathless forests which stretched around, from the lonely seas which lay behind, from the fierceness of the elements, from their sense of dislocation from all familiar historic lands. There

* Essay xxxiii.; "of Plantations."

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was, in fact, something of this. Certain passages in their history, certain parts of their writings, are only explained by it. It would have been general, and have wrought a sure public decline, except for the constant corrective of their labor. They would have seen, oftener than they did, phantom armies fighting in the clouds, fateful omens in aurora and comet.* The dread of witchcraft, still prevalent in the old world, would more widely have fevered their minds. The voice of demons would have oftener been heard, in the howl of wolves, or the winds wailing among the pines. But the sweat of their brows medicined their minds. The work which was set for them was too difficult and vast to allow such tendencies to get domination.

A continent was before them to be subdued, and with few and poor instruments. With axe and hoe, mattock and plough, they were to conquer an undefined wilderness, untouched, till then, by civilized industry; with no land behind to which to retreat, with only the ocean and the sand-hills in the rear.

It was a tremendous undertaking; greater than any

* "The Aurora Borealis, the beauty of the northern sky, which is now gazed upon with so much delight, was seen for the first time in New England in 1721, and filled the inhabitants with alarm. Superstition beheld with terror its scarlet hues, and transformed its waving folds of light, moving like banners along the sky, into harbingers of coming judgment, and omens of impending havoc. Under its brilliant reflection, the snow, the trees, and every object, seemed to be dyed with blood, and glowed like fire."

The Continent to be subdued.

infant people had ever encountered ; greater, fortunately, than they themselves knew at the time. Plutarch tells us that Stasicrates once proposed to Alexander to have Mount Athos carved into a statue of himself ; a copious river flowing from one hand, and a city of thousands of people in the other ; the Ægean archipelago stretching outward from the feet. Even the ambition which decreed Alexandria, and made Asia its vassal, might have pleased itself with a fancy so colossal. But it was trifling, compared with the work which the colonists of this country were called to take up ; as a Macedonian bay, compared with the ocean on which their rugged continent looked. Upon that continent they were to impress the likeness of themselves. What Europe had only partially realized, after its centuries of advancing civilization, they and their children were suddenly to repeat, fashioning the wilderness to the home of commonwealths.

The strain of the work was prodigious and unceasing. No wonder that the applications of science have always had a charm for Americans ! No wonder that "impossible" has ever since seemed here a foolish word ! But the muscle which was built, in both body and will, was as tough and tenacious as the work was enormous.

They had to secure,—by invention, where English policy permitted, by purchase, where it did not,—whatever they needed for the comfort of life, and whatever means of culture they possessed. Their fisheries were

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pushed along the jagged, tempestuous coasts, till they struck the icy barriers of the pole. Their commerce was cultivated, against the jealousy of the English legislation, till, in Burke's time, you see to what it had grown. They had to establish their own free schools; to found and enlarge their needed colleges; to supply themselves with such literature at home as could be produced, in the pauses of their prodigious labor; to import from the old world what their small means enabled them to buy.

They had their chartered liberties to maintain, against Royal hostility, in the face of governors who hindered and threatened, if they did not—like Andros—compel the clerks of their assemblies to write "Finis" midway on the records.* So it happened to them, according to Milton's ideal plan for a perfect education. "The next remove," he says, "must be to the study of politics; to know the beginning, end, and reason of political societies; that they may not, in a dangerous fit of the Commonwealth, be such poor, shaken, uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counselors have lately showed themselves, but steadfast pillars of the State." The plain men who had come here from Europe, and who had before them a

* "His Excellency, Sir Edmund Andros, Knight, Captain-General and Governor of his Majesty's Territory and Dominion in New England, by order from his Majesty, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the 31st of October, 1687, took into his hands the government of this colony of Connecticut, it being by his Majesty annexed to the Massachusetts and other Colonies, under his Excellency's government. FINIS."

Secretary's Allyn's record; quoted by Palfrey, vol. 3, p. 545.

Military training of the Colonists.

wilderness to be conquered, were trained according to this generous philosophy. A large practical sovereignty had to be in their hands, from the beginning, for their self-preservation. They established offices, enacted laws, organized a militia, waged war, coined money; and the lessons which they learned, of legislative prudence, administrative skill, bore abundant fruit in that final Revolution which did not spring from accident or from passion, which was born of debate, which was shaped by ideas, and which vindicated itself by majestic State-papers.

Their military tuition was as constant as their work. Against the Indians, against the French, somewhere or other, as we look back, they seem to have been always in arms—so uncertain and brief were their intervals of peace. Not always threatened violence to themselves, sometimes the remote collisions and entanglements of European politics, involved them in these wars—as in that great one which commenced in the question of the Austrian Succession, and which swept through our untrodden woods its trail of fire; when, as Macaulay says of Frederick, “that he might rob a neighbor whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coasts of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the great lakes of North America.” Precisely as the colonies grew, any power hostile to Great Britain was incited to attack them. At some point or other, therefore, the straggling and interrupted line of their scanty possessions was

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lighted with conflagration, vocal with volleys, dripping with blood, down almost to the day of the Revolution.

But from this incessant martial training came practised skill in the use of weapons, a cool courage, a supreme self-reliance,—the temper which looks from many portraits, which faced emergencies without a fear, and whose fire withered the British ranks at Concord-bridge and on Breed's-hill.

There is not much that is picturesque in the annals which cover the hundred years after New Amsterdam became New York. They look, to the world, perhaps to us, for the most part, common-place. Volcanic regions are the more picturesque in landscape forms, because of the sudden violence of the forces which have shattered and reset them. The legends cling to rugged peaks. The pinnacles of Pilatus incessantly attract them, while they slide from the smoother slopes of Righi. So a convulsive and violent history, full of reäction, fracture, catastrophe, appeals to the imagination as one never does that is quiet and gradual, where a people moves forward in steady advance, and the sum of its accomplishment is gradually built of many particulars. There was not much in the career of the colonists, in the hundred years before the Revolution, which poetry would be moved to celebrate, or whose attractive pictorial aspects the painter would make haste to sketch.

But the discipline answered its purpose better than

The severe Discipline salutary.

if it had been pictorial, tragic. It was apt to the in-born temper of the colonists. It fortified in them that hardy and resolute moral life which they had brought. It guarded the forces which were their birth-right from waste and loss. The colony of Surinam, under tropical skies—where mahogany was a firewood, and the Tonquin-bean, with its swift sweetness, perfumed the air; where sugar and spices are produced without limit, and coffee and cotton have returned to the planter two crops a year—this seemed, at the time, a prodigal recompense for the colony of New Netherland. But Guiana demoralized the men who possessed it; while the harder work, under harsher heavens, gave an empire to those who adhered to these coasts. No unbought luxuries became to them as dazzling and deadly Sabine gifts. No lazy and voluptuous life, as of tropical islands, dissolved their manhood. Their little wealth was wrested from the wilderness, or won from the seas; and the cost of its acquirement measured its permanence. They were, as a people, honest and chaste, because they were workers. Their ways might be rough, their slang perhaps strong. But no prevalence among them of a prurient fiction inflamed their passions; no fescennine plays blanchd the bloom of their modesty. Their discipline was Spartan, not Athenian; but it made their life robust and sound. The sharp hellebore cleansed their heads for a more discerning practical sense. They never had to meet what Carlyle declares the present practi-

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cal problem of governments: "given, a world of knaves, to educe an honesty from their united action."

As their numbers increased, and their industry became various, the sense of independence on foreign countries was constantly nurtured. The feeling of inward likeness and sympathy among themselves, the tendencies to combine in an organic union, grew always more earnest. Patriotism was intensified into a passion; since, if any people owned their lands, certainly they did, who had hewn out their spaces amid the woods, had purchased them not with wampum but with work, had fertilized them with their own blood. And, at last, trained by labor and by war, by educational influences, Christian teachings, legislative responsibilities, commercial success,—at last, the spirit which they had brought, which in Europe had been resisted and thwarted until its force was largely broken, but which here had not died, and had not declined, but had continued diffused as a common life among them all,—this made their separate establishment in the world a necessity of the time. "Monarchy unaccountable is the worst sort of tyranny, and least of all to be endured by free-born men"—that was a maxim of Aristotle's politics, twenty centuries before their Congress. It had been repeated and emphasized by Milton, while the ancestors of those assembled in the Congress were fighting for freedom across the seas.* Holland had believed it,

* Milton had added other words, in the same great discourse of Lib-

The fruit of the American Spirit.

and protestant Germany, as well as England. It became the vivid and illuminating conviction of the people here gathered; and in its light the Republic dawned. The fore-gleams of that were playing already along the horizon, while Burke was speaking. Before his words had reached this country, the small red rim was palpable on the eastern sky, showing the irresistible up-spring of that effulgent yet temperate day which never since has ceased to shine.

All this was the work of that early distinctive American Spirit, so rich in its history, so manifold in its sources, so supreme in its force. It had not been born of sudden passion. It was not the creature of one school of theology. It had had no narrow insular origin. It was richer and broader than Burke himself discerned it to be. Holland and France, as well as England, had contributed to it. From the age of Elizabeth, and of William the Silent, of Henry Fourth and Gustavus Adolphus, it had burst forth upon these shores. It had here been working for a century and a half, before the Stamp Act. It had wrought in

erty, which might have served as a motto for the Congress convened at Philadelphia, just a hundred years after his death :

† “ And surely they that shall boast, as we do, to be a free nation, and not to have in themselves the power to remove or to abolish any governor, supreme or subordinate, with the government itself upon urgent causes, may please their fancy with a ridiculous and painted freedom, fit to cozen babies, but are indeed under tyranny and servitude, as wanting that power which is the root and source of all liberty, to dispose and economize in the land which God hath given them, as masters of family in their own house and free inheritance.”

The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.

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Europe for three generations, before the first hemlock hut sheltered a white face between Plymouth and Jamestown. It had been born of vehement struggle, vast endurance, sublime aspiration, heroic achievement: and on this reserved continent of the future God gave it room, incentive, training. Assault did not destroy it here. Reäction did not waste it. It flourished more royally, because transplanted. At last it sent back of its inherent, perennial life, to revive the lands from which at the outset it had come.

The work of that spirit is what we inherit. It was that which got its coveted relief from paying three-pence a pound upon tea, by erecting another empire in the world. It was that which counseled, wrought, and fought, from the first Congress to the last capitulation. It is that which every succeeding reminiscence, in the coming crowded centennial years, will constantly recall. It is that which interlinks our annals with those of the noblest time in Europe, and makes us heirs to the greatness of its history. It is that which shows the providence of Him who is the eternal Master-builder of states and peoples, and the reach of whose plan runs through the ages!

The patriot's duty, the scholar's mission, the philanthropist's hope, are illustrated by it. For as long as this spirit survives among us, uncorrupted by luxury, unabated by time, no matter what the strife of parties, no matter what the commercial reverse, institutions which express it will be permanent here as the moun-

May it be enduring !

tains and the stars. When this shall fail, if fail it does, it will not need a foreign foe, it will not ask domestic strife, to destroy our liberties. Of themselves they will fall ; as the costly column, whose base has rotted ; as the mighty frame, whose life has gone !

May He who brought it, still maintain it :—that when others are gathered here, a hundred years hence, to review the annals not yet written, they may have only to trace the unfolding of its complete and sovereign life !

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,
AND THE EFFECTS OF IT.

ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT: FELLOW-CITIZENS:—

THE long-expected day has come, and, passing peacefully the impalpable line which separates ages, the Republic completes its hundredth year. The predictions in which affectionate hope gave inspiration to political prudence are fulfilled. The fears of the timid, and the hopes of those to whom our national existence is a menace, are alike disappointed. The fable of the physical world becomes the fact of the political; and after alternate sunshine and storm, after heavings of the earth which only deepened its roots, and ineffectual blasts of lightning whose lurid threat died in the air, under a sky now raining on it benignant influence, the century-plant of American Independence and popular Government bursts into this magnificent blossom, of a joyful celebration illuminating the land!

With what desiring though doubtful expectation those whose action we commemorate looked for the possible coming of this day, we know from the

Oration at New York.

records which they have left. With what anxious solicitude the statesmen and the soldiers of the following generation anticipated the changes which might take place before this centennial year should be reached, we have heard ourselves, in their great and fervent admonitory words. How dim and drear the prospect seemed to our own hearts fifteen years since, when, on the fourth of July, 1861, the Thirty-seventh Congress met at Washington with no representative in either house from any State south of Tennessee and Western Virginia, and when a determined and numerous army, under skillful commanders, approached and menaced the Capital and the Government,—this we surely have not forgotten; nor how, in the terrible years which followed, the blood and fire, and vapor of smoke, seemed oftentimes to swim as a sea, or to rise as a wall, between our eyes and this anniversary.

‘It cannot outlast the second generation from those who founded it’ was the exulting conviction of the many who loved the traditions and state of monarchy, and who felt them insecure before the widening fame in the world of our prosperous Republic. ‘It may not reach its hundredth year’ was the deep and sometimes the sharp apprehension of those who felt, as all of us felt, that their own liberty, welfare, hope, with the brightest political promise of the world, were bound up with the unity and the life of our nation. Never was solicitude

Deliverance of the Nation.

more intense, never was prayer to Almighty God more fervent and constant—not in the earliest beginnings of our history, when Indian ferocity threatened that history with a swift termination, not in the days of supremest trial amid the Revolution—than in those years when the nation seemed suddenly split asunder, and forces which had been combined for its creation were clenched and rocking back and forth in bloody grapple on the question of its maintenance.

The prayer was heard. The effort and the sacrifice have come to their fruitage; and to-day the nation—still one, as at the start, though now expanded over such immense spaces, absorbing such incessant and diverse elements from other lands, developing within it opinions so conflicting, interests so various, and forms of occupation so novel and manifold—to-day the nation, emerging from the toil and the turbulent strife, with the earlier and the later clouds alike swept out of its resplendent stellar arch, pauses from its work to remember and rejoice; with exhilarated spirit to anticipate its future; with reverent heart to offer to God its great *Te Deum*.

Not here alone, in this great city, whose lines have gone out into all the earth, and whose superb progress in wealth, in culture, and in civic renown, is itself the most illustrious token of the power and beneficence of that frame of government under which it has been realized; not alone in yonder, I had

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almost said adjoining, city, whence issued the paper that first announced our national existence, and where now rises the magnificent Exposition, testifying for all progressive States to their respect and kindness toward us, the radiant clasp of diamond and opal on the girdle of the sympathies which interweave their peoples with ours; not alone in Boston, the historic town, first in resistance to British aggression, and foremost in plans for the new and popular organization, one of whose citizens wrote his name, as if cutting it with a plough-share, at the head of all on our great charter, another of whose citizens was its intrepid and powerful champion, aiding its passage through the Congress; not there alone, nor yet in other great cities of the land, but in smaller towns, in villages and hamlets, this day will be kept, a secular Sabbath, sacred alike to memory and to hope.

Not only, indeed, where men are assembled, as we are here, will it be honored. The lonely and remote will have their part in this commemoration. Where the boatman follows the winding stream, or the woodman explores the forest shades; where the miner lays down his eager drill beside rocks which guard the precious veins; or where the herdsman, along the sierras, looks forth on the seas which now reflect the rising day, which at our midnight shall be gleaming like gold in the setting sun,—there also will the day be regarded, as a day of memorial. The sailor on the sea will note it, and dress his ship in

The Day Widely Recognized.

its brightest array of flags and bunting. Americans dwelling in foreign lands will note and keep it.

London itself will to-day be more festive because of the event which a century ago shadowed its streets, incensed its Parliament, and tore from the crown of its obstinate King the chiefest jewel. On the boulevards of Paris, in the streets of Berlin, and along the leveled bastions of Vienna, at Marseilles and at Florence, upon the silent liquid ways of stately Venice, in the passes of the Alps, under the shadow of church and obelisk, palace and ruin, which still prolong the majesty of Rome; yea, further East, on the Bosphorus, and in Syria; in Egypt, which writes on the front of its compartment in the great Exhibition, "The oldest people of the world sends its morning-greeting to the youngest nation;" along the heights behind Bombay, in the foreign hongs of Canton, in the "Islands of the Morning," which found the dawn of their new age in the startling sight of an American squadron entering their bays—everywhere will be those who have thought of this day, and who join with us to greet its coming.

No other such anniversary, probably, has attracted hitherto such general notice. You have seen Rome, perhaps, on one of those shining April days when the traditional anniversary of the founding of the city fills its streets with civic processions, with military display, and the most elaborate fire-works in Europe; you may have seen Holland, in 1872, when the whole

Oration at New York.

country bloomed with orange on the three-hundredth anniversary of the capture by the sea-beggars of the city of Briel, and of the revolt against Spanish domination which thereupon flashed on different sides into sudden explosion. But these celebrations, and others like them, have been chiefly local. The world outside has taken no wide impression from them. This of ours is the first of which many lands, in different tongues, will have had report. Partly because the world is narrowed in our time, and its distant peoples are made neighbors, by the fleeter machineries now in use; partly because we have drawn so many to our population from foreign lands, while the restless and acquisitive spirit of our people has made them at home on every shore; but partly, also, and essentially, because of the nature and the relations of that event which we commemorate, and of the influence exerted by it on subsequent history, the attention of men is more or less challenged, in every centre of commerce and of thought, by this anniversary.

Indeed it is not unnatural to feel—certainly it is not irreverent to feel—that they who by wisdom, by valor, and by sacrifice, have contributed to perfect and maintain the institutions which we possess, and have added by death as well as by life to the lustre of our history, must also have an interest in this day; that in their timeless habitations they remember us beneath the lower circle of the heavens, are glad in

Unseen Spectators.

our joy, and share and lead our grateful praise. To a spirit alive with the memories of the time; and rejoicing in its presage of nobler futures, recalling the great, the beloved, the heroic, who have labored and joyfully died for its coming, it will not seem too fond an enthusiasm to feel that the air is quick with shapes we cannot see, and glows with faces whose light serene we may not catch! They who counseled in the Cabinet, they who defined and settled the law in decisions of the Bench, they who pleaded with mighty eloquence in the Senate, they who poured out their souls in triumphant effusion for the liberty which they loved in forum or pulpit, they who gave their young and glorious life as an offering on the field, that government for the people, and by the people, might not perish from the earth—it cannot be but that they too have part and place in this Jubilee of our history! God make our doings not unworthy of such spectators! and make our spirit sympathetic with theirs from whom all selfish passion and pride have now forever passed away!

The interest which is felt so distinctly and widely in this anniversary reflects a light on the greatness of the action which it commemorates. It shows that we do not unduly exaggerate the significance or the importance of that; that it had really large, even world-wide relations, and contributed an effective and a valuable force to the furtherance of the cause of freedom, education, humane institutions, and popular

Oration at New York.

advancement, wherever its influence has been felt. Yet when we consider the action itself, it may easily seem but slight in its nature, as it was certainly commonplace in its circumstances. There was nothing even picturesque in its surroundings, to enlist for it the pencil of the painter, or help to fix any luminous image of that which was done on the popular memory.

In this respect it is singularly contrasted with other great and kindred events in general history; with those heroic and fruitful actions in English history which had especially prepared the way for it, and with which the thoughtful student of the past will always set it in intimate relations. Its utter simplicity, as compared with their splendor, becomes impressive.

When, five centuries and a half before, on the fifteenth of June, and the following days, in the year of our Lord 1215, the English barons met King John in the long meadow of Runnemede, and forced from him the Magna Charta—the strong foundation and steadfast bulwark of English liberty, concerning which Mr. Hallam has said in our own time that “all which has been since obtained is little more than as confirmation or commentary,”—no circumstance was wanting, of outward pageantry, to give dignity, brilliance, impressiveness, to the scene. On the one side was the King, with the Bishops and nobles who attended him, with the Master of the Templars, and the Papal legate before whom he had lately rendered

Magna Charta.

his homage.* On the other side was the great and determined majority of the barons of England, with multitudes of knights, armed vassals, and retainers.† With them in purpose, and in resolute zeal, were most of those who attended the King. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the English clergy, was with them; the Bishops of London, Winchester, Lincoln, Rochester, and of other great sees. The Earl of Pembroke, dauntless and wise, of vast and increasing power in the realm, and not long after to be its Protector, was really at their head. Robert Fitz-Walter, whose fair daughter Matilda the profligate king had forcibly abducted, was Marshal of the army—the “Army of God, and the Holy Church.” William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, half-brother of the King, was on the field; the Earls of Albemarle, Arundel, Gloucester, Hereford, Norfolk, Oxford, the great Earl Warenne, who claimed the same right of the sword in his barony which William the Conqueror had had in the kingdom, the Constable of Scotland, Hubert de Burgh,

* May 15, A.D. 1213.

† “Quant à ceux qui se trouvaient du côté des barons, il n'est ni nécessaire ni possible de les énumérer, puisque toute la noblesse d'Angleterre réunie en un seul corps, ne pouvait tomber sous le calcul. Lorsque les prétentions des révoltés eurent été débattues, le roi Jean, comprenant son infériorité vis-à-vis des forces de ses barons, accorda sans résistance les lois et libertés qu'on lui demandait, et les confirma par la charte.”

Chronique de Matt. Paris, trad. par A. Huillard-Bréholles. Tome Troisième, pp. 6, 7.

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seneschal of Poictou, and many other powerful nobles,—descendants of the daring soldiers whose martial valor had mastered England, Crusaders who had followed Richard at Ascalon and at Jaffa, whose own liberties had since been in mortal peril. Some burgesses of London were present, as well ; troubadours, minstrels, and heralds were not wanting ; and doubtless there mingled with the throng those skillful clerks whose pens had drawn the great instrument of freedom, and whose training in language had given a remarkable precision to its exact clauses and cogent terms.

Pennons and banners streamed at large, and spear-heads gleamed, above the host. The June sunshine flashed reflected from inlaid shield and masled armor. The terrible quivers of English yeomen hung on their shoulders. The voice of trumpets, and clamoring bugles, was in the air. The whole scene was vast as a battle, though bright as a tournament ; splendid, but threatening, like burnished clouds, in which lightnings sleep. The king, one of the handsomest men of the time, though cruelty, perfidy, and every foul passion must have left their traces on his face, was especially fond of magnificence in dress ; wearing, we are told, on one Christmas occasion, a rich mantle of red satin, embroidered with sapphires and pearls, a tunic of white damask, a girdle lustrous with precious stones, and a baldric from his shoulder, crossing his breast, set with diamonds and emeralds,

The Brilliant Panorama.

while even his gloves, as indeed is still indicated on his fine effigy in Worcester cathedral, bore similar ornaments, the one a ruby, the other a sapphire.

Whatever was superb, therefore, in that consummate age of royal and baronial state, whatever was splendid in the glittering and grand apparatus of chivalry, whatever was impressive in the almost more than princely pomp of prelates of the Church,—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth can give,—

all this was marshalled on that historic plain in Surrey, where John and the barons faced each other, where Saxon king and Saxon earl had met in council before the Norman had footing in England; and all combined to give a fit magnificence of setting to the great charter there granted and sealed.

The tower of Windsor—not of the present castle and palace, but of the earlier detached fortress which already crowned the cliff, and from which John had come to the field—looked down on the scene. On the one side, low hills enclosed the meadow; on the other, the Thames flowed brightly by, seeking the capital and the sea. Every feature of the scene was English, save one; but over all loomed, in a portentous and haughty stillness, in the ominous presence of the envoy from Rome, that ubiquitous power, surpassing all others, which already had once laid the kingdom under interdict, and had exiled John from church and throne, but to which later he had

Oration at New York.

been reconciled, and on which now he secretly relied to annul the charter which he was granting.

The brilliant panorama illuminates the page which bears its story. It rises still as a vision before one, as he looks on the venerable parchment originals, preserved to our day in the British Museum. If it be true, as Hallam has said, that from that era a new soul was infused into the people of England, it must be confessed that the place, the day, and all the circumstances of that new birth were fitting to the great and the vital event.

That age passed away, and its peculiar splendor of aspect was not thereafter to be repeated. Yet when, four hundred years later, on the seventh of June,* 1628, the Petition of Right, the second charter of the liberties of England, was finally presented by Parliament to Charles the First, the scene and its accessories were hardly less impressive.

* Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles I., 1628-9.
Rushworth's Hist. Coll. Charles I, p. 625.

It is rather remarkable that neither Hume, Clarendon, Hallam, De Lolme, nor Macaulay, mentions this date, though all recognize the capital importance of the event. It does not appear in even Knight's Popular History of England. Miss Aikin, in her Memoirs of the Court of Charles I., gives it as June 8, (Vol. I, p. 216); and Chambers' Encyclopædia, which ought to be careful and accurate in regard to the dates of events in English history, says, under the title 'Petition of Rights': "At length, on both Houses of Parliament insisting on a fuller answer, he pronounced an unqualified assent in the usual form of words, 'Soit fait comme il est désiré,' on the 26th of June, 1628." The same statement is repeated in the latest Revised Edition of that Encyclopædia. Lingard gives the date correctly.

The Petition of Right.

Into that law—called a Petition, as if to mask the deadly energy of its blow upon tyranny—had been collected by the skill of its framers all the heads of the despotic prerogative which Charles had exercised, that they might all be smitten together, with one tremendous destroying stroke. The king, enthroned in his chair of state, looked forth on those who waited for his word, as still he looks, with his fore-casting and melancholy face, from the canvas of Van Dyck. Before him were assembled the nobles of England, in peaceful array, and not in armor, but with a civil power in their hands which the older gauntlets could not have held, and with the memories of a long renown almost as visible to themselves and to the king as were the tapestries suspended on the walls.

Crowding the bar, behind these descendants of the earlier barons, were the members of the House of Commons, with whom the law now presented to the king had had its origin, and whose boldness and tenacity had constrained the peers, after vain endeavor to modify its provisions, to accept them as they stood. They were the most powerful body of representatives of the kingdom that had yet been convened; possessing a private wealth, it was estimated, surpassing three-fold that of the Peers, and representing not less than they the best life, and the oldest lineage, of the kingdom which they loved.

Their dexterous, dauntless, and far-sighted sagacity

Oration at New York.

is yet more evident as we look back than their wealth or their breeding; and among them were men whose names will be familiar while England continues. Wentworth was there, soon to be the most dangerous of traitors to the cause of which he was then the champion, but who then appeared as resolute as ever to vindicate the ancient, lawful, and vital liberties of the kingdom; and Pym was there, the unsurpassed statesman, who, not long afterward was to warn the dark and haughty apostate that he never again would leave pursuit of him so long as his head stood on his shoulders.* Hampden was there, considerate and serene, but inflexible as an oak; once imprisoned already for his resistance to an unjust taxation, and ready again to suffer and to conquer in the same supreme cause. Sir John Eliot was there, eloquent and devoted, who had tasted also the bitterness of imprisonment, and who, after years of its subsequent experience, was to die a martyr in the Tower. Coke was there, seventy-seven years of age, but full of fire as full of fame, whose vehement and unswerving hand had had chief part in framing the Petition. Selden was there, the reputé of whose learning was already continental. Sir Francis Seymour, Sir Robert Philips, Strode, Hobart, Denzil Holles, and Valentine—such were the commoners; and there, at the outset of a career not imagined by either, faced the king a silent young member who had come now

* Welwood's Memorials, quoted in Forster's Life of Pym, p. 62.

The Seventh of June, 1628.

to his first Parliament, at the age of twenty-nine, from the borough of Huntingdon, Oliver Cromwell.

In a plain cloth suit he probably stood among his colleagues. But they were often splendid, and even sumptuous, in dress; with slashed doublets, and cloaks of velvet, with flowing collars of rich lace, the swords by their sides, in embroidered belts, with flashing hilts, their very hats jeweled and plumed, the abundant dressed and perfumed hair falling in curls upon their shoulders. Here and there may have been those who still more distinctly symbolized their spirit, with steel corslets, overlaid with lace and rich embroidery.

So stood they in the presence, representing to the full the wealth, and genius, and stately civic pomp of England, until the king had pronounced his assent, in the express customary form, to the law which confirmed the popular liberties; and when, on hearing his unequivocal final assent, they burst into loud, even passionate acclamations of victorious joy, there had been from the first no scene more impressive in that venerable Hall, whose history went back to Edward the Confessor.

In what sharp contrast with the rich ceremonial and the splendid accessories of these preceding kindred events, appears that modest scene at Philadelphia, from which we gratefully date to-day a hundred years of constant and prosperous national life!

In a plain room, of an unpretending and recent

Oration at New York.

building—the lower east room of what then was a State-house, what since has been known as the “ Independence Hall ”—in the midst of a city of perhaps thirty thousand inhabitants—a city which preserved its rural aspect, and the quaint simplicity of whose plan and structures had always been marked among American towns—were assembled probably less than fifty persons to consider a paper prepared by a young Virginia lawyer, giving reasons for a Resolve which the assembly had adopted two days before. They were farmers, planters, lawyers, physicians, surveyors of land, with one eminent Presbyterian clergyman. A majority of them had been educated at such schools, or primitive colleges, as then existed on this continent, while a few had enjoyed the rare advantage of training abroad, and foreign travel ; but a considerable number, and among them some of the most influential, had had no other education than that which they had gained by diligent reading while at their trades or on their farms.

The figure to which our thoughts turn first is that of the author of the careful paper on the details of which the discussion turned. It has no special majesty or charm, the slight tall frame, the sun-burned face, the gray eyes spotted with hazel, the red hair which crowns the head ; but already, at the age of thirty-three, the man has impressed himself on his associates as a master of principles, and of the language in which those principles find expression,

The Continental Congress.

so that his colleagues have left to him, almost wholly, the work of preparing the important Declaration. He wants readiness in debate, and so is now silent; but he listens eagerly to the vigorous argument and the forcible appeals of one of his fellows on the committee, Mr. John Adams, and now and then speaks with another of the committee, much older than himself—a stout man, with a friendly face, in a plain dress, whom the world already had heard something of as Benjamin Franklin. These three are perhaps most prominently before us as we recall the vanished scene, though others were there of fine presence and cultivated manners, and though all impress us as substantial and respectable representative men, however harsh the features of some, however brawny their hands with labor. But certainly nothing could be more unpretending, more destitute of pictorial charm than that small assembly of persons for the most part quite unknown to previous fame, and half of whose names it is not probable that half of us in this assembly could now repeat.

After a discussion somewhat prolonged; as it seemed at the time, especially as it had been continued from previous days, and after some minor amendments of the paper, toward evening it was adopted, and ordered to be sent to the several States, signed by the president and the secretary; and the simple transaction was complete. Whatever there may have been of proclamation and bell-ringing

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appears to have come on subsequent days. It was almost a full month before the paper was engrossed, and signed by the members. It must have been nearly or quite the same time before the news of its adoption had reached the remoter parts of the land.

If pomp of circumstances were necessary to make an event like this great and memorable, there would have been others in our own history more worthy far of our commemoration. As matched against multitudes in general history, it would sink into instant and complete insignificance. Yet here, to-day, a hundred years from the adoption of that paper, in a city which counts its languages by scores, and beats with the tread of a million feet, in a country whose enterprise flies abroad over sea and land on the rush of engines not then imagined, in a time so full of exciting hopes that it hardly has leisure to contemplate the past, we pause from all our toil and traffic, our eager plans and impetuous debate, to commemorate the event. The whole land pauses, as I have said; and some distinct impression of it will follow the sun, wherever he climbs the steep of Heaven, until in all countries it has more or less touched the thoughts of men.

Why is this? is a question, the answer to which should interpret and vindicate our assemblage.

It is not simply because a century happens to have passed since the event thus remembered occurred.

The Declaration an Act of the People.

A hundred years are always closing from some event, and have been since Adam was in his prime. There was, of course, some special importance in the action then accomplished—in the nature of that action, since not in its circumstances—to justify such long record of it; and that importance it is ours to define. In the perspective of distance the small things disappear, while the great and eminent keep their place. As Carlyle has said: “A king in the midst of his body-guards, with his trumpets, war-horses, and gilt standard-bearers, will look great though he be little; only some Roman Carus can give audience to satrap ambassadors, while seated on the ground, with a woollen cap, and supping on boiled pease, like a common soldier.”*

What was, then, the great reality of power in what was done a hundred years since, which gives it its masterful place in history—makes it Roman and regal amid all its simplicity?

Of course, as the prime element of its power, it was the action of a People, and not merely of persons; and such action of a People has always a momentum, a public force, a historic significance, which can pertain to no individual arguments and appeals. There are times, indeed, when it has the energy and authority in it of a secular inspiration; when the supreme soul which rules the world comes through it to utterance, and a thought surpassing

* Essay on Schiller. Essays: Vol. II., p. 301.

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man's wisest plan, a will transcending his strongest purpose, is heard in its commanding voice.

It does not seem extravagant to say that the time to which our thoughts are turned was one of these.

For a century and a half the emigrants from Europe had brought hither, not the letters alone, the arts and industries, or the religious convictions, but the hardy moral and political life, which had there been developed in ages of strenuous struggle and work. France and Germany, Holland and Sweden, as well as England, Scotland, and Ireland, had contributed to this. The Austrian Tyrol, the Bavarian highlands, the Bohemian plain, Denmark, even Portugal, had had their part in this colonization. The ample domain which here received the earnest immigrants had imparted to them of its own oneness; and diversities of language, race, and custom, had fast disappeared in the governing unity of a common aspiration, and a common purpose to work out through freedom a nobler well-being.

The general moral life of this people, so various in origin, so accordant in spirit, had only risen to grander force through the toil and strife, the austere training, the long patience of endurance, to which it here had been subjected. The exposures to heat, and cold, and famine, to unaccustomed labors, to alternations of climate unknown in the old world, to malarial forces brooding above the mellow and drainless recent lands,—these had fatally stricken many;

Unity of the Colonies.

but those who survived were tough and robust, the more so, perhaps, because of the perils which they had surmounted. Education was not easy, books were not many, and the daily newspaper was unknown; but political discussion had been always going on, and men's minds had gathered unconscious force as they strove with each other, in eager debate, on questions concerning the common welfare. They had had much experience in subordinate legislation, on the local matters belonging to their care; had acquired dexterity in performing public business, and had often had to resist or amend the suggestions or dictates of Royal governors. For a recent people, dwelling apart from older and conflicting states, they had had a large experience in war, the crack of the rifle being never unfamiliar along the near frontier, where disciplined skill was often combined with savage fury to sweep with sword or scar with fire their scattered settlements.

By every species, therefore, of common work, of discussion, endurance, and martial struggle, the descendants of the colonists scattered along the American coast had been allied to each other. They were more closely allied than they knew. It needed only some signal occasion, some summons to a sudden heroic decision, to bring them into instant general combination; and Huguenot and Hollander, Swede, German, and Protestant Portuguese, as well as Englishman, Scotchman, Irishman, would then forget

Oration at New York.

that their ancestors had been different, in the supreme consciousness that now they had a common country, and before all else were all of them Americans.

That time had come. That consciousness had for fifteen years been quickening in the people, since the "Writs of Assistance" had been applied for and granted, in 1761, when Otis, resigning his honorable position under the crown, had flung himself against the alarming innovation with an eloquence as blasting as the stroke of the lightning which in the end destroyed his life. With every fresh invasion by England of their popular liberties, with every act which threatened such invasion by providing opportunity and the instruments for it, the sense of a common privilege and right, of a common inheritance in the country they were fashioning out of the forest, of a common place in the history of the world, had been increased among the colonists. They were plain people, with no strong tendencies to the ideal. They wanted only a chance for free growth; but they must have that, and have it together, though the continent cracked. The diamond is formed, it has sometimes been supposed, under a swift enormous pressure, of masses meeting, and forcing the carbon into a crystal. The ultimate spirit of the American colonists was formed in like manner; the weight of a rocky continent beneath, the weight of an oppression only intolerable because undefined

Agreement in the Declaration.

pressing on it from above. But now that spirit, of inestimable price, reflecting light from every angle, and harder to be broken than anything material, was suddenly shown in acts and declarations of conventions and assemblies from the Penobscot to the St. Mary's.

Any commanding public temper, once established in a people, grows bolder, of course, more inquisitive and inventive, more sensible of its rights, more determined on its future, as it comes more frequently into exercise. This in the colonies lately had had the most significant of all its expressions, up to that point, in the resolves of popular assemblies that the time had come for a final separation from the kingdom of Great Britain. The eminent Congress of two years before had given it powerful reinforcement. Now, at last, it entered the representative American assembly, and claimed from that the ultimate word. It found what it sought. The Declaration was only the voice of that supreme, impersonal force, that will of communities, that universal soul of the State.

The vote of the colony then thinly covering a part of the spaces not yet wholly occupied by this great State, was not, indeed, at once formally given for such an instrument. It was wisely delayed, under the judicious counsel of Jay, till a provincial Congress could assemble, specially called, and formally authorized, to pronounce the deliberate resolve of the colony; and so it happened that only twelve colonies

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voted at first for the great Declaration, and that New York was not joined to the number till five days later. But Jay knew, and all knew, that numerous, wealthy, eminent in character, high in position as were those here and elsewhere in the country—in Massachusetts, in Virginia, and in the Carolinas—who were by no means yet prepared to sever their connection with Great Britain, the general and governing mind of the people was fixed upon this, with a decision which nothing could change, with a tenacity which nothing could break. The forces tending to that result had wrought to their development with a steadiness and strength which the stubbornest resistance had hardly delayed. The spirit which now shook light and impulse over the land was recent in its precise demand, but as old in its birth as the first Christian settlements; and it was that spirit—not of one, nor of fifty, not of all the individuals in all the conventions, but the vaster spirit which lay behind—which put itself on sudden record through the prompt and accurate pen of Jefferson.

He was himself in full sympathy with it, and only by reason of that sympathy could give it such consummate expression. Not out of books, legal researches, historical inquiry, the careful and various studies of language, came that document; but out of repeated public debate, out of manifold personal and private discussion, out of his clear sympathetic observation of the changing feeling and thought of

Public Sentiment Declared.

men, out of that exquisite personal sensibility to vague and impalpable popular impulses which was in him innately combined with artistic taste, an ideal nature, and rare power of philosophical thought. The voice of the cottage as well as the college, of the church as well as the legislative assembly, was in the paper. It echoed the talk of the farmer in home-spun, as well as the classic eloquence of Lee, or the terrible tones of Patrick Henry. It gushed at last from the pen of its writer, like the fountain from the roots of Lebanon, a brimming river when it issues from the rock; but it was because its sources had been supplied, its fullness filled, by unseen springs; by the rivulets winding far up among the cedars, and percolating through hidden crevices in the stone; by melting snows, whose white sparkle seemed still on the stream; by fierce rains, with which the basins above were drenched; by even the dews, silent and wide, which had lain in stillness all night upon the hill.

The Platonic idea of the development of the State was thus realized here; first Ethics, then Politics. A public opinion, energetic and dominant, took its place from the start as the chief instrument of the new civilization. No dashing manœuvre of skillful commanders, no sudden burst of popular passion, was in the Declaration; but the vast mystery of a supreme and imperative public life, at once diffused and intense—behind all persons, before all plans,

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beneath which individual wills are exalted, at whose touch the personal mind is inspired, and under whose transcendent impulse the smallest instrument becomes of a terrific force. That made the Declaration; and that makes it now, in its modest brevity, take its place with Magna Charta and the Petition of Right, as full as they of vital force, and destined to a parallel permanence.

Because this intense common life of a determined and manifold People was not behind them, other documents, in form similar to this, and in polish and cadence of balanced phrase perhaps its superiors, have had no hold like that which it keeps on the memory of men. What papers have challenged the attention of mankind within the century, in the stately Spanish tongue, in Mexico, New Granada, Venezuela, Bolivia, or the Argentine Republic, which the world at large has now quite forgotten! How the resonant proclamations of German or of French Republicans, of Hungarian or Spanish revolutionists and patriots, have vanished as sound absorbed in the air! Eloquent, persuasive, just, as they were, with a vigor of thought, a fervor of passion, a fine completeness and symmetry of expression, in which they could hardly be surpassed, they have now only a literary value. They never became great general forces. They were weak, because they were personal; and history is too crowded, civilization is too vast, to take much impression from occasional docu-

The Declaration Old in its Life.

ments. Only then is a paper of secular force, or long remembered, when behind it is the ubiquitous energy of the popular will, rolling through its words in vast diapason, and charging its clauses with tones of thunder.

Because such an energy was behind it, our Declaration had its majestic place and meaning; and they who adopted it saw nowhere else

So rich advantage of a promised glory,
As smiled upon the forehead of their action.

Because of that, we read it still, and look to have it as audible as now, among the dissonant voices of the world, when other generations, in long succession, have come and gone!

But further, too, it must be observed that this paper, adopted a hundred years since, was not merely the declaration of a People, as distinguished from eminent and cultured individuals—a confession before the world of the public State-faith, rather than a political thesis—but it was also the declaration of a People which claimed for its own a great inheritance of equitable laws, and of practical liberty, and which now was intent to enlarge and enrich that. It had roots in the past, and a long genealogy; and so it had a vitality inherent, and an immense energy.

They who framed it went back, indeed, to first principles. There was something philosophic and

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ideal in their scheme, as always there is when the general mind is deeply stirred. It was not superficial. Yet they were not undertaking to establish new theories, or to build their state upon artificial plans and abstract speculations. They were simply evolving out of the past what therein had been latent; were liberating into free exhibition and unceasing activity a vital force older than the history of their colonization, and wide as the lands from which they came. They had the sweep of vast impulses behind them. The slow tendencies of centuries came to sudden consummation in their Declaration; and the force of its impact upon the affairs and the mind of the world was not to be measured by its contents alone, but by the relation in which these stood to all the vehement discussion and struggle of which it was the latest outcome.

This ought to be, always, distinctly observed.

The tendency is strong, and has been general, among those who have introduced great changes in the government of states, to follow some plan of political, perhaps of social innovation, which enlists their judgment, excites their fancy, and to make a comely theoretic habitation for the national household, rather than to build on the old foundations,—expanding the walls, lifting the height, enlarging the doorways, enlightening with new windows the halls, but still keeping the strength and renewing the age of an old familiar and venerated structure. You re-

The Weakness of Theoretical Changes.

member how in France, in 1789, and the following years, the schemes of those whom Napoleon called the "ideologists" succeeded each other, no one of them gaining a permanent supremacy, though each included important elements, till the armed consulate of 1799 swept them all into the air, and put in place of them one masterful genius and ambitious will. You remember how in Spain, in 1812, the new Constitution proclaimed by the Cortes was thought to inaugurate with beneficent provisions a wholly new era of development and progress; yet how the history of the splendid peninsula, from that day to this, has been but the record of a struggle to the death between the Old and the New, the contest as desperate, it would seem, in our time as it was at the first.

It must be so, always, when a preceding state of society and government, which has got itself established through many generations, is suddenly superseded by a different fabric, however more evidently conformed to right reason. The principle is not so strong as the prejudice. Habit masters invention. The new and theoretic shivers its force on the obstinate coherence of the old and the established. The modern structure fails and is replaced, while the grim feudal keep, though scarred and weather-worn, the very cement seeming gone from its walls, still scowls defiance at the red right-hand of the lightning itself.

It was no such rash speculative change which here was attempted. The People whose deputies framed

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our Declaration were largely themselves descendants of Englishmen; and those who were not, had lived long enough under English institutions to be impressed with their tendency and spirit. It was therefore only natural that even when adopting that ultimate measure which severed them from the British crown, they should retain all that had been gained in the mother-land through centuries of endurance and strife. They left nothing that was good; they abolished the bad, added the needful, and developed into a rule for the continent the splendid precedents of great former occasions. They shared still the boast of Englishmen that their constitution "has no single date from which its duration is to be reckoned," and that "the origin of the English law is as undiscoverable as that of the Nile." They went back themselves, for the origin of their liberties, to the most ancient muniments of English freedom. Jefferson had affirmed, in 1774, that a primitive charter of American Independence lay in the fact that as the Saxons had left their native wilds in the North of Europe, and had occupied Britain—the country which they left asserting over them no further control, nor any dependence of them upon it—so the Englishmen coming hither had formed, by that act, another state, over which Parliament had no rights, in which its laws were void till accepted.*

But while seeking for their liberties so archaic a basis, neither he nor his colleagues were in the least

Loyalty of the Colonies to English Precedents.

careless of what subsequent times had done to complete them. There was not one element of popular right, which had been wrested from crown and noble in any age, which they did not keep; not an equitable rule, for the transfer or the division of property, for the protection of personal rights, or for the detection and punishment of crime, which was not precious in their eyes. Even Chancery jurisdiction they widely retained, with the distinct tribunals, derived from the ecclesiastical courts, for probate of wills; and English technicalities were maintained in their courts, almost as if they were sacred things. Especially that equality of civil rights among all commoners, which Hallam declares the most prominent characteristic of the English Constitution—the source of its permanence, its improvement, and its vigor—they perfectly preserved; they only more sharply affirmatively declared it. Indeed, in renouncing their allegiance to the king, and putting the United Colonies in his place, they felt themselves acting in intimate harmony with the spirit and drift of the ancient constitution. The Executive here was to be elective, not hereditary, to be limited and not permanent in the term of his functions; and no established peerage should exist. But each State retained its governor, its legislature, generally in two houses, its ancient statute and common law; and if they had been challenged for English authority for their attitude toward the crown, they might have replied in the words of

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Bracton, the Lord Chief-Justice five hundred years before, under the reign of Henry the Third, that "the law makes the king;" "there is no king, where will, and not law, bears rule;" "if the king were without a bridle, that is the law, they ought to put a bridle upon him." * They might have replied in the words of Fox, speaking in Parliament, in daring defiance of the temper of the House, but with many supporting him, when he said that in declaring Independence, they "had done no more than the English had done against James the Second." †

* Ipse autem rex, non debet esse sub homine, sed sub Deo et sub Lege, quia Lex facit regem. Attribuat igitur rex Legi quod Lex attribuit ei, videlicet dominationem et potestatem, non est enim rex ubi dominatur voluntas et non Lex. De Leg. et Cons. Angliæ; Lib. I., cap 8, P. 5.

Rex autem habet superiorem, Deum. Item, Legem, per quam factus est rex. Item, curiam suam, videlicet comites, Barones, quia comites dicuntur quasi socii regis, et qui habet socium habet magistrum; et ideo si rex fuerit sine fraeno, i. e. sine Lege, debent ei fraenum ponere; etc. Lib. II., cap. 16, P. 3.

The following is still more explicit: "As the head of a body natural cannot change its nerves and sinews, cannot deny to the several parts their proper energy, their due proportion and aliment of blood; neither can a King, who is the head of a body politic, change the laws thereof, nor take from the people what is theirs by right, against their consent. * * For he is appointed to protect his subjects in their lives, properties, and laws; for this very end and purpose he has the delegation of power from the people, and he has no just claim to any other power but this." Sir John Fortescue's Treatise, De Laudibus Legum Angliæ, c. 9, [about A. D. 1470,] quoted by Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. VIII., part III.

† Speech of October 31, 1776: "The House divided on the Amendment. Yeas, 87; nays, 242."

Rulers, Properly Representatives of the People.

They had done no more; though they had not elected another king in place of him whom they renounced. They had taken no step so far in advance of the then existing English Constitution as those which the Parliament of 1640 took in advance of the previous Parliaments which Charles had dissolved. If there was a right more rooted than another in that Constitution, it was the right of the people which was taxed to have its vote in the taxing legislature. If there was anything more accordant than another with its historic temper and tenor, it was that the authority of the king was determined when his rule became tyrannous. Jefferson had but perfectly expressed the doctrine of the lovers of freedom in England for many generations, when he said in his Summary view of the Rights of America, in 1774, that "the monarch is no more than the chief officer of the people, appointed by the laws, and circumscribed with definite powers, to assist in working the great machine of government, erected for their use, and consequently subject to their superintendence;" that "kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people;" and that a nation claims its rights, "as derived from the laws of nature, not as the gift of their chief magistrate."*

* Rulers are no more than attorneys, agents, and trustees, for the people, and if the cause, the interest and trust, is insidiously betrayed, or wantonly trifled away, the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have deputed, and to constitute abler and better agents, attorneys, and trustees.—JOHN ADAMS. Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law; 1765. Works: Vol. III., pp. 456-7. 37

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That had been the spirit, if not as yet the formulated doctrine, of Raleigh, Hampden, Russell, Sydney—of all the great leaders of liberty in England. Milton had declared it, in a prose as majestic as any passage of the *Paradise Lost*. The Commonwealth had been built on it; and the whole Revolution of 1688. And they who now framed it into their permanent organic law, and made it supreme in the country they were shaping, were in harmony with the noblest inspirations of the past. They were not innovating with a rash recklessness. They were simply accepting and re-affirming what they had learned from luminous events and illustrious men. So their work had a dignity, a strength, and a permanence which can never belong to mere fresh speculation. It interlocked with that of multitudes going before. It derived a virtue from every field of struggle in England; from every scaffold, hallowed by free and consecrated blood; from every hour of great debate. It was only the complete development into law, for a separated people, of that august ancestral liberty, the germs of which had preceded the Heptarchy, the gradual definition and establishment of which had been the glory of English history. A thousand years brooded over the room where they asserted hereditary rights. Its walls showed neither portraits nor mottoes; but the Kaiser-saal at Frankfurt was not hung around with such recollections. No titles were worn by those plain men; but there had not been

English Liberty, the Parent of Ours.

one knightly soldier, or one patriotic and prescient statesman, standing for liberty in the splendid centuries of its English growth, who did not touch them with unseen accolade, and bid them be faithful. The paper which they adopted, fresh from the pen of its young author, and written on his hired pine table, was already, in essential life, of a venerable age; and it took immense impulse, it derived an instant and vast authority, from its relation to that undying past in which they too had grand inheritance, and from which their public life had come.

Englishmen themselves now recognize this, and often are proud of it. The distinguished representative of Great Britain at Washington may think his government, as no doubt he does, superior to ours; but his clear eye cannot fail to see that English liberty was the parent of ours, and that the new and broader continent here opened before it, suggested that expansion of it which we celebrate to-day. His ancestors, like ours, helped to build the Republic; and its faithfulness to the past, amid all reformations, was one great secret of its earliest triumph, has been one source, from that day to this, of its enduring and prosperous strength.

The Congress, and the People behind it, asserted for themselves hereditary liberties, and hazarded everything in the purpose to complete them. But they also affirmed, with emphasis and effect, another right, more general than this, which made their action

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significant and important to other peoples, which made it, indeed, a signal to the nations of the right of each to assert for itself the just prerogative of forming its government, electing its rulers, ordaining its laws, as might to it seem most expedient. Hear again the immortal words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; * * that to secure these [unalienable] rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundations in such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

This is what the party of Bentham called "the assumption of natural rights, claimed without the slightest evidence of their existence, and supported by vague and declamatory generalities." This is what we receive as the decisive and noble declaration, spoken with the simplicity of a perfect conviction, of a natural right as patent as the continent; a declaration which challenged at once the attention of mankind, and which is now practically assumed as a premise in international relations and public law.

Of course it was not a new discovery. It was old as the earliest of political philosophers; as old, indeed, as the earliest communities, which, becoming

The Dutch Republic, Exceptional in Europe.

established in particular locations, had there developed their own institutions, and repelled with vehemence the assaults that would change them. But in the growth of political societies, and the vast expansion of imperial states, by the conquest of those adjacent and weaker, this right, so easily recognized at the outset, so germane to the instincts, so level with the reason, of every community, had widely passed out of men's thoughts; and the power of a conquering state to change the institutions and laws of a people, or impose on it new ones,—the power of a parent state to shape the forms and prescribe the rules of the colonies which went from it,—had been so long and abundantly exercised, that the very right of the people, thus conquered or colonial, to consult its own interests in the frame of its government, had been almost forgotten.

It might be a high speculation of scholars, or a charming dream of political enthusiasts. But it was not a maxim for the practical statesman; and whatever its correctness as an ideal principle, it was vain to expect to see it established in a world full of kings who claimed, each for himself, an authority from God, and full of states intent on grasping and governing by their law adjacent domains. The revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish domination had been the one instance in modern history in which the inherent right of a People to suit itself in the frame of its government had been proclaimed, and

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then maintained; and that had been at the outset a paroxysmal revolt, against tyranny so crushing, and cruelties so savage, that they took it out of the line of examples. The Dutch Republic was almost as exceptional, through the fierce wickedness which had crowded it into being, as was Switzerland itself, on its Alpine heights. For an ordinary state to claim self-regulation, and found its government on a Plebiscit, was to contradict precedent, and to set at defiance European tradition.

Our fathers, however, in a somewhat vague way, had held from the start that they had right to an autonomy; and that acts of Parliament, if not appointments of the crown, took proper effect upon these shores only by reason of their assent. Their charters were held to confirm this doctrine. The conviction, at first practical and instinctive, rather than theoretic, had grown with their growth, and had been intensified into positive affirmation and public exhibition as the British rule impinged more sharply on their interests and their hopes. It had finally become the general and decisive conviction of the colonies. It had spoken already in armed resistance to the troops of the king. It had been articulated, with gathering emphasis, in many resolves of assemblies and conventions. It was now, finally, most energetically, set forth to the world in the great Declaration; and in that utterance, made general, not particular, and founding the rights of the people

The Declaration Instructive to other Nations.

in this country on principles as wide as humanity itself, there lay an appeal to every nation:—an appeal whose words took unparalleled force, were illuminated and made rubrical, in the fire and blood of the following war.

When the Emperor Ferdinand visited Innsbruck, that beautiful town of the Austrian Tyrol, in 1838, it is said that the inhabitants wrote his name in immense bonfires, along the sides of the precipitous hills which shelter the town. Over a space of four or five miles extended that colossal illumination, till the heavens seemed on fire in the far-reflected up-streaming glow. The right of a people, separated from others, to its own institutions—our fathers wrote this in lines so vivid and so large that the whole world could see them; and they followed that writing with the consenting thunders of so many cannon that even the lands across the Atlantic were shaken and filled with the long reverberation.

The doctrine had, of course, in every nation, its two-fold internal application, as well as its front against external powers. On the one hand it swept with destroying force against the notion, so long maintained, of the right of certain families in the world, called Hapsburg, Bourbon, Stuart, or whatever, to govern the rest; and wherever it was received it made the imagined divine right of kings an obsolete and contemptible fiction. On the other hand, it smote with equal energy against the preten-

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sions of any minority within the state—whether banded together by the ties of descent, or of neighborhood in location, or of common opinion, or supposed common interest—to govern the rest; or even to impair the established and paramount government of the rest by separating themselves organically from it.

It was never the doctrine of the fathers that the people of Kent, Cornwall, or Lincoln, might sever themselves from the rest of England, and, while they had their voice and vote in the public councils, might assert the right to govern the whole, under threat of withdrawal if their minor vote were not suffered to control. They were not seeking to initiate anarchy, and to make it thenceforth respectable in the world by support of their suffrages. They recognized the fact that the state exists to meet permanent needs, is the ordinance of God as well as the family; and that He has determined the bounds of men's habitation, by rivers, seas, and mountain chains, shaping countries as well as continents into physical coherence, while giving one man his birth on the north of the Pyrenées, another on the south, one on the terraced banks of the Rhine, another in English meadow or upland. They saw that a common and fixed habitation, in a country thus physically defined, especially when combined with community of descent, of permanent public interest, and of the language on which thought is interchanged—that these

The People, as a Whole, Sovereign.

make a People; and such a People, as a true and abiding body-politic, they affirmed had right to shape its government, forbidding others to intermeddle.

But it must be the general mind of the People which determined the questions thus involved; not a dictating class within the state, whether known as peers or associated commoners, whether scattered widely, as one among several political parties, or grouped together in some one section, and having a special interest to encourage. The decision of the general public mind, as deliberately reached, and authentically declared, that must be the end of debate; and the right of resistance, or the right of division, after that, if such right exist, it is not to be vindicated from their Declaration. Any one who thought such government by the whole intolerable to him was always at liberty to expatriate himself, and find elsewhere such other institutions as he might prefer. But he could not tarry, and still not submit. He was not a monarch, without the crown, before whose contrary judgment and will the public councils must be dumb. While dwelling in the land, and having the same opportunity with others to seek the amendment of what he disapproved, the will of the whole was binding upon him; and that obligation he could not vacate by refusing to accept it. If one could not, neither could ten, nor a hundred, nor a million, who still remained a minority of the whole.

To allow such a right would have been to make

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government transparently impossible. Not separate sections only, but counties, townships, school districts, neighborhoods, must have the same right; and each individual, with his own will for his final law, must be the complete ultimate State.

It was no such disastrous folly which the fathers of our Republic affirmed. They ruled out kings, princes, peers, from any control over the People; and they did not give to a transient minority, wherever it might appear, on whatever question, a greater privilege, because less defined, than that which they jealously withheld from these classes. Such a tyranny of irresponsible occasional minorities would have seemed to them only more intolerable than that of classes, organized, permanent, and limited by law. And when it was affirmed by some, and silently feared by many others, that in our late immense civil war the multitudes who adhered to the old Constitution had forgotten or discarded the principles of the earlier Declaration, those assertions and fears were alike without reason. The People which adopted that Declaration, when distributed into colonies, was the People which afterward, when compacted into states, established the Confederation of 1781—imperfect enough, but whose abiding renown it is that under it the war was ended. It was the same People which subsequently framed the supreme Constitution. “We, the people of the United States,” do ordain and establish the following Constitution,

The Constitution Supreme.

— so runs the majestic and vital instrument. It contains provisions for its own emendation. When the people will, they may set it aside, and put in place of it one wholly different; and no other nation can intervene. But while it continues, it, and the laws made normally under it, are not subject to resistance by a portion of the people, conspiring to direct or limit the rest. And whensoever any pretension like this shall appear, if ever again it does appear, it will undoubtedly as instantly appear that, even as in the past so in the future, the people whose our government is, and whose complete and magnificent domain God has marked out for it, will subdue resistance, compel submission, forbid secession, though it cost again, as it cost before, four years of war, with treasure uncounted and inestimable life.

The right of a People upon its own territory, as equally against any classes within it or any external powers, this is the doctrine of our Declaration. We know how it here has been applied, and how settled it is upon these shores for the time to come. We know, too, something of what impression it instantly made upon the minds of other peoples, and how they sprang to greet and accept it. In the fine image of Bancroft, “the astonished nations, as they read that all men are created equal, started out of their lethargy, like those who have been exiles from child-

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hood, when they suddenly hear the dimly-remembered accents of their mother-tongue.”*

The theory of scholars had now become the maxim of a State. The diffused ineffectual nebulous light had got itself concentrated into an orb; and the radiance of it, penetrating and hot, shone afar. You know how France responded to it; with passionate speed seeking to be rid of the terrific establishments in church and state which had nearly crushed the life of the people, and with a beautiful though credulous unreason trying to lift, by the grasp of the law, into intelligence and political capacity the masses whose training for thirteen centuries had been despotic. No operation of natural law was any more certain than the failure of that too daring experiment. But the very failure involved progress from it; involved, undoubtedly, that ultimate success which it was vain to try to extemporize. Certainly the other European powers will not again intervene, as they did, to restore a despotism which France has abjured, and with foreign bayonets to uphold institutions which it does not desire. Italy, Spain, Germany, England—they are not Republican in the form of their government, nor as yet democratic in the distribution of power. But each of them is as full of this organic, self-demonstrating doctrine, as is our own land; and England would send no troops to Canada to compel its submission if it should decide to set up for itself.

* Vol. VIII., p. 473.

Liberal States most Secure.

Neither Italy nor Spain would maintain a monarchy a moment longer than the general mind of the country preferred it. Germany would be fused in the fire of one passion if any foreign nation whatever should assume to dictate the smallest change in one of its laws.

The doctrine of the proper prerogative of kings, derived from God, which in the last century was more common in Europe than the doctrine of the centrality of the sun in our planetary system, is now as obsolete among the intelligent as are the epicycles of Ptolemy. Every government expects to stand henceforth by assent of the governed, and by no other claim of right. It is strong by beneficence, not by tradition; and at the height of its military successes it circulates appeals, and canvasses for ballots. Revolution is carefully sought to be averted, by timely and tender amelioration of the laws. The most progressive and liberal states are most evidently secure; while those which stand, like old olive-trees at Tivoli, with feeble arms supported on pillars, and hollow trunks filled up with stone, are palpably only tempting the blast. An alliance of sovereigns, like that called the Holy, for reconstructing the map of Europe, and parcelling out the passive peoples among separate governments, would to-day be no more possible than would Charlemagne's plan for reconstructing the empire of the West. Even Murad, Sultan of Turkey, now takes the place

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of Abdul the deposed, "by the grace of God, and the will of the people;" and that accomplished and illustrious Prince, whose empire under the Southern Cross rivals our own in its extent, and most nearly approaches it on this hemisphere in stability of institutions and in practical freedom, has his surest title to the throne which he honors, in his wise liberality, and his faithful endeavor for the good of his people. As long as in this he continues, as now, a recognized leader among the monarchs—ready to take and seek suggestions from even a democratic Republic—his throne will be steadfast as the water-sheds of Brazil; and while his successors maintain his spirit, no domestic insurrection will test the question whether they retain that celerity in movement with which Dom Pedro has astonished Americans.

It is no more possible to reverse this tendency toward popular sovereignty, and to substitute for it the right of families, classes, minorities, or of intervening foreign states, than it is to arrest the motion of the earth, and make it swing the other way in its annual orbit. In this, at least, our fathers' Declaration has made its impression on the history of mankind.

It was the act of a People, and not of persons, except as these represented and led that. It was the act of a People, not starting out on new theories of government, so much as developing into forms of law and practical force a great and gradual inherit-

Effect on Popular Advancement.

ance of freedom. It was the act of a People, declaring for others, as for itself, the right of each to its own form of government, without interference from other nations, without restraint by privileged classes.

It only remains, then, to ask the question how far it has contributed to the peace, the advancement, and the permanent welfare, of the People by which it was set forth; of other nations which it has affected. And to ask this question is almost to answer it. The answer is as evident as the sun in the heavens.

It certainly cannot be affirmed that we in America, any more than persons or peoples elsewhere, have reached as yet the ideal state, of private liberty combined with a perfect public order, or of culture complete, and a supreme character. The political world, as well as the religious, since Christ was on earth, looks forward, not backward, for its millennium. That Golden Age is still to come which is to shine in the perfect splendor reflected from Him who is ascended; and no prophecy tells us how long before the advancing race shall reach and cross its glowing marge, or what long effort, or what tumults of battle, are still to precede.

In this country, too, there have been immense special impediments to hinder wide popular progress in things which are highest. Our people have had a continent to subdue. They have been, from the

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start, in constant migration. Westward, from the counties of the Hudson and the Mohawk, around the lakes, over the prairies, across the great river,—westward still, over alkali plains, across terrible cañons, up gorges of the mountains where hardly the wild goat cou'd find footing,—westward always, till the Golden Gate opened out on the sea which has been made ten thousand miles wide, as if nothing less could stop the march,—this has been the popular movement, from almost the day of the great Declaration. To-morrow's tents have been pitched in new fields; and last year's houses await new possessors.

With such constant change, such wide dislocation of the mass of the people from early and settled home-associations, and with the incessant occupation of the thoughts by the great physical problems presented,—not so much by any struggle for existence, as by harvests for which the prairies waited, by mills for which the rivers clamored, by the coal and the gold which offered themselves to the grasp of the miner,—it would not have been strange if a great and dangerous decadence had occurred in that domestic and private virtue of which Home is the nursery, in that generous and reverent public spirit which is but the effluence of its combined rays. It would have been wholly too much to expect that under such influences the highest progress should have been realized, in speculative thought, in artistic culture, or in the researches of pure science.

Literary Attainments.

Accordingly, we find that in these departments not enough has been accomplished to make our progress signal in them, though here and there the eminent souls "that are like stars and dwell apart" have illumined themes highest with their high interpretation. But History has been cultivated among us, with an enthusiasm, to an extent, hardly, I think, to have been anticipated among a people so recent and expectant; and Prescott, Motley, Irving, Ticknor, with him upon whose splendid page all American history has been amply illustrated, are known as familiarly and honored as highly in Europe as here. We have had as well distinguished poets, and have them now; to whom the nation has been responsive; who have not only sung themselves, but through whom the noblest poems of the Old World have come into the English tongue, rendered in fit and perfect music, and some of whose minds, blossoming long ago in the solemn or beautiful fancies of youth, with perennial energy still ripen to new fruit as they near or cross their four-score years. In Medicine, and Law, as well as in Theology, in Fiction, Biography, and the vivid Narrative of exploration and discovery, the people whose birth-day we commemorate has added something to the possession of men. Its sculptors and painters have won high places in the brilliant realm of modern art. Publicists like Wheaton, jurists like Kent, have gained a celebrity reflecting honor on the land; and

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if no orator, so vast in knowledge, so profound and discursive in philosophical thought, so affluent in imagery, and so glorious in diction, as Edmund Burke, has yet appeared, we must remember that centuries were needed to produce him elsewhere, and that any of the great Parliamentary debaters, aside from him, have been matched or surpassed in the hearing of those who have hung with rapt sympathetic attention on the lips of Clay, or of Rufus Choate, or have felt themselves listening to the mightiest mind which ever touched theirs when they stood beneath the imperial voice in which Webster spoke.

In applied science there has been much done in the country, for which the world admits itself our grateful debtor. I need not multiply illustrations of this, from locomotives, printing-presses, sewing-machines, revolvers, steam-reapers, bank-locks. One instance suffices, most signal of all.

When Morse, from Washington, thirty-two years ago, sent over the wires his word to Baltimore, "What hath God wrought," he had given to all the nations of mankind an instrument the most sensitive, expansive, quickening, which the world yet possesses. He had bound the earth in electric network.

England touches India to-day, and France Algeria, while we are in contact with all the continents, upon those scarcely perceptible nerves. The great strat-

The Electric Telegraph.

egist, like Von Moltke, with these in his hands, from the silence of his office directs campaigns, dictates marches, wins victories; the statesman in the cabinet inspires and regulates the distant diplomacies; while the traveler in any port or mart is by the same marvel of mechanism in instant communication with all centres of commerce. It is certainly not too much to say that no other invention of the world in this century has so richly deserved the medals, crosses, and diamond decorations, the applause of senates, the gifts of kings, which were showered upon its author, as did this invention, which finally taught and utilized the lightnings whose nature a signer of the great Declaration had made apparent.

But after all it is not so much in special inventions, or in eminent attainments made by individuals, that we are to find the answer to the question, "What did that day, a hundred years since, accomplish for us?" Still less is it found in the progress we have made in outward wealth and material success. This might have been made, approximately at least, if the British supremacy had here continued. The prairies would have been as productive as now, the mines of copper and silver and gold as rich and extensive, the coal-beds as vast, and the cotton-fields as fertile, if we had been born the subjects of the Georges, or of Victoria. Steam would have kept its propulsive force, and sea and land have been theatres of its triumph. The river would have been as

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smooth a highway for the commerce which seeks it ; and the leap of every mountain stream would have given as swift and constant a push to the wheels that set spindles and saws in motion. Electricity itself would have lost no property, and might have become as completely as now the fire-winged messenger of the thought of mankind.

But what we have now, and should not have had except for that paper which the Congress adopted, is the general and increasing popular advancement in knowledge, vigor, as I believe in moral culture, of which our country has been the arena, and in which lies its hope for the future. The independence of the nation has reacted, with sympathetic force, on the personal life which the nation includes. It has made men more resolute, aspiring, confident, and more susceptible to whatever exalts. The doctrine that all by creation are equal,—not in respect of physical force or of mental endowment, of means for culture or inherited privilege, but in respect of immortal faculty, of duty to each other, of right to protection and to personal development,—this has given manliness to the poor, enterprise to the weak, a kindling hope to the most obscure. It has made the individuals of whom the nation is composed more alive to the forces which educate and exalt.

There has been incessant motive, too, for the wide and constant employment of these forces. It has been felt that, as the People is sovereign here, that

The Efficiency of the Church.

People must be trained in mind and spirit for its august and sovereign function. The establishment of common-schools, for a needful primary secular training, has been an instinct of Society, only recognized and repeated in provisions of statutes. The establishment of higher schools, classical and general, of colleges, scientific and professional seminaries, has been as well the impulse of the nation, and the furtherance of them a care of governments. The immense expansion of the press in this country has been based fundamentally upon the same impulse, and has wrought with beneficent general force in the same direction. Religious instruction has gone as widely as this distribution of secular knowledge.

It used to be thought that a Church dissevered from the State must be feeble. Wanting wealth of endowments and dignity of titles—its clergy entitled to no place among the peers, its revenues assured by no legal enactments—it must remain obscure and poor; while the absence of any external limitations, of parliamentary statutes and a legal creed, must leave it liable to endless division, and tend to its speedy disintegration into sects and schisms. It seemed as hopeless to look for strength, wealth, beneficence, for extensive educational and missionary work, to such churches as these, as to look for aggressive military organization to a convention of

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farmers, or for the volume and thunder of Niagara to a thousand sinking and separate rills.

But the work which was given to be done in this country was so great and momentous, and has been so constant, that matching itself against that work, the Church, under whatever name, has realized a strength, and developed an activity, wholly fresh in the world in modern times. It has not been antagonized by that instinct of liberty which always awakens against its work where religion is required by law. It has seized the opportunity. Its ministers and members have had their own standards, leaders, laws, and sometimes have quarreled, fiercely enough, as to which were the better. But in the work which was set them to do, to give to the sovereign American people the knowledge of God in the Gospel of His Son, their only strife has been one of emulation—to go the furthest, to give the most, and to bless most largely the land and its future.

The spiritual incentive has of course been supreme; but patriotism has added its impulse to the work. It has been felt that Christianity is the basis of Republican empire, its bond of cohesion, its life-giving law; that the manuscript copies of the Gospels, sent by Gregory to Augustine at Canterbury, and still preserved on sixth century parchments at Oxford and Cambridge—more than Magna Charta itself, these are the roots of English liberty; that Magna Charta, and the Petition of Right, with our completing Declaration,

Effect of Educational Work.

were possible only because these had been before them. And so in the work of keeping Christianity prevalent in the land, all earnest churches have eagerly striven. Their preachers have been heard where the pioneer's fire scarcely was kindled. Their schools have been gathered in the temporary camp, not less than in the hamlet or town. They have sent their books with lavish distribution, they have scattered their Bibles like leaves of autumn, where settlements hardly were more than prophesied. In all languages of the land they have told the old story of the Law and the Cross, a present Redemption, and a coming Tribunal. The highest truths, most solemn and inspiring, have been the truths most constantly in hand. It has been felt that, in the highest sense, a muscular Christianity was indispensable where men lifted up axes upon the thick trees. The delicate speculations of the closet and the schools were too dainty for the work; and the old confessions of Councils and Reformers, whose undecaying and sovereign energy no use exhausts, have been those always most familiar, where the trapper on his stream, or the miner in his gulch, has found priest or minister on his track.

Of course not all the work has been fruitful. Not all God's acorns come to oaks, but here and there one. Not all the seeds of flowers germinate, but enough to make some radiant gardens. And out of all this work and gift, has come a mental and moral training, to the nation at large, such as it certainly

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would not have had except for this effort, the effort for which would not have been made, on a scale so immense, except for this incessant aim to fit the nation for its great experiment of self-regulation. The Declaration of Independence has been the great charter of Public Education ; has given impulse and scope to this prodigious Missionary work.

The result of the whole is evident enough. I am not here as the eulogist of our People, beyond what facts justify. I admit, with regret, that American manners sometimes are coarse, and American culture often very imperfect ; that the noblest examples of consummate training imply a leisure which we have not had, and are perhaps most easily produced where social advantages are more permanent than here, and the law of heredity has a wider recognition. We all know, too well, how much of even vice and shame there has been, and is, in our national life ; how sluggish the public conscience has been before sharpest appeals ; how corruption has entered high places in the government, and the blister of its touch has been upon laws, as well as on the acts of prominent officials. And we know the reckless greed and ambition, the fierce party spirit, the personal wrangles and jealous animosities, with which our Congress has been often dishonored, at which the nation—sadder still—has sometimes laughed, in idiotic unreason.

But knowing all this, and with the impression of it full on our thoughts, we may exult in the real,

The Nation's Moral Soundness.

steady, and prophesying growth of a better spirit toward dominance in the land. I scout the thought that we as a people are worse than our fathers! John Adams, at the head of the War Department, in 1776, wrote bitter laments of the corruption which existed in even that infant age of the Republic, and of the spirit of venality, rapacious and insatiable, which was then the most alarming enemy of America. He declared himself ashamed of the age which he lived in! In Jefferson's day, all Federalists expected the universal dominion of French infidelity. In Jackson's day, all Whigs thought the country gone to ruin already, as if Mr. Biddle had had the entire public hope locked up in the vaults of his terminated bank. In Polk's day, the excitements of the Mexican War gave life and germination to many seeds of rascality. There has never been a time—not here alone, in any country—when the fierce light of incessant inquiry blazing on men in public life, would not have revealed forces of evil like what we have seen, or when the condemnation which followed the discovery would have been sharper. And it is among my deepest convictions that, with all which has happened to debase and debauch it, the nation at large was never before more mentally vigorous or morally sound.

Gentlemen: The demonstration is around us!

This city, if any place on the continent, should have been the one where a reckless wickedness should

Oration at New York.

have had sure prevalence, and reforming virtue the least chance of success. Starting in 1790 with a white population of less than thirty thousand—growing steadily for forty years, till that population had multiplied six-fold—taking into itself, from that time on, such multitudes of emigrants from all parts of the earth that the dictionaries of the languages spoken in its streets would make a library—all forms of luxury coming with wealth, and all means and facilities for every vice—the primary elections being always the seed-bed out of which springs its choice of rulers, with the influence which it sends to the public councils—its citizens so absorbed in their pursuits that oftentimes, for years together, large numbers of them have left its affairs in hands the most of all unsuited to so supreme and delicate a trust—it might well have been expected that while its docks were echoing with a commerce which encompassed the globe, while its streets were thronged with the eminent and the gay from all parts of the land, while its homes had in them uncounted thousands of noble men and cultured women, while its stately squares swept out year by year across new spaces, while it founded great institutions of beneficence, and shot new spires upward toward heaven, and turned the rocky waste to a pleasure-ground famous in the earth, its government would decay, and its recklessness of moral ideas, if not as well of political principles, would become apparent.

This City an Illustration.

Men have prophesied this, from the outset till now. The fear of it began with the first great advance of the wealth, population, and fame of the city; and there have not been wanting facts in its history which served to renew, if not to justify, the fear.

But when the War of 1861 broke on the land, and shadowed every home within it, this city,—which had voted by immense majorities against the existing administration, and which was linked by unnumbered ties with the vast communities then rushing to assail it,—flung out its banners from window and spire, from City Hall and newspaper office, and poured its wealth and life into the service of sustaining the Government, with a swiftness and a vehement energy that were never surpassed. When, afterward, greedy and treacherous men, capable and shrewd, deceiving the unwary, hiring the skillful, and moulding the very law to their uses, had concentrated in their hands the government of the city, and had bound it in seemingly invincible chains, while they plundered its treasury,—it rose upon them, when advised of the facts, as Samson rose upon the Philistines; and the two new cords that were upon his hands no more suddenly became as flax that was burnt than did those manacles imposed upon the city by the craft of the Ring.

Its leaders of opinion to-day are the men—like him who presides in our assembly—whom virtue exalts, and character crowns. It rejoices in a Chief

Oration at New York.

Magistrate as upright and intrepid, in a virtuous cause, as any of those whom he succeeds. It is part of a State whose present position, in laws, and officers, and the spirit of its people, does no discredit to the noblest of its memories. And from these heights between the rivers, looking over the land, looking out on the earth to which its daily embassies go, it sees nowhere beneath the sun a city more ample in its moral securities, a city more dear to those who possess it, a city more splendid in promise and in hope.

What is true of the city is true, in effect, of all the land. Two things, at least, have been established by our national history, the impression of which the world will not lose. The one is, that institutions like ours, when sustained by a prevalent moral life throughout the nation, are naturally permanent. The other is, that they tend to peaceful relations with other states. They do this in fulfillment of an organic tendency, and not through any accident of location. The same tendency will inhere in them, wheresoever established.

In this age of the world, and in all the states which Christianity quickens, the allowance of free movement to the popular mind is essential to the stability of public institutions. There may be restraint enough to guide, and keep such movement from premature exhibition. But there cannot be force enough used to resist it, and to reverse its gathering current. If

Progress in Europe.

there is, the government is swiftly overthrown, as in France so often, or is left on one side, as Austria has been by the advancing German people; like the castle of Heidelberg, at once palace and fortress, high-placed and superb, but only the stateliest ruin in Europe, while the rail-train thunders through the tunnel beneath it, and the Neckar sings along its near channel as if tower and tournament never had been. Revolution, transformation, organic change, have thus all the time for this hundred years been proceeding in Europe; sometimes silent, but oftener amid thunders of stricken fields; sometimes pacific, but oftener with garments rolled in blood.

In England the progress has been peaceful, the popular demands being ratified as law whenever the need became apparent. It has been vast, as well as peaceful; in the extension of suffrage, in the ever-increasing power of the Commons, in popular education. Chatham himself would hardly know his own England if he should return to it. The Throne continues, illustrated by the virtues of her who fills it; and the ancient forms still obtain in Parliament. But it could not have occurred to him, or to Burke, that a century after the ministry of Grenville the embarkation of the Pilgrims would be one of the prominent historical pictures on the panels of the lobby of the House of Lords, or that the name of Oliver Cromwell, and of Bradshaw, President of the High Court of Justice, would be cut in the stone in Westminster

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Abbey, over the places in which they were buried, and whence their decaying bodies were dragged to the gibbet and the ditch. England is now, as has been well said, "an aristocratic Republic, with a permanent Executive." Its only perils lie in the fact of that aristocracy, which, however, is flexible enough to endure, of that permanence in the Executive, which would hardly outlive one vicious Prince.

What changes have taken place in France, I need not remind you, nor how uncertain is still its future. You know how the swift untiring wheels, of advance or reâction, have rolled this way and that, in Italy, and in Spain; how Germany has had to be reconstructed; how Hungary has had to fight and suffer for that just place in the Austrian councils which only imperial defeat surrendered. You know how precarious the equilibrium now is, in many states, between popular rights and princely prerogative; what armies are maintained, to fortify governments; what fear of sudden and violent change, like an avalanche tumbling at the touch of a foot, perplexes nations. The records of change make the history of Europe. The expectation of change is almost as wide as the continent itself.

Meantime, how permanent has been this Republic, which seemed at the outset to foreign spectators a mere sudden insurrection, a mere organized riot! Its organic law, adopted after exciting debate, but arousing no battle and enforced by no army, has been in-

Triumph of the Republic.

terpreted, and peacefully administered, with one great exception, from the beginning. It has once been assailed, with passion and skill, with splendid daring and unbounded self-sacrifice, by those who sought a sectional advantage through its destruction. No monarchy of the world could have withstood that assault. It seemed as if the fatal Apocalypse had come, to drench the land with plague and blood, and wrap it in a fiery gloom. The Republic,

—pouring, like the tide into a breach,
With ample and brim fulness of its force,

subdued the rebellion, emancipated the race which had been in subjection, restored the dominion of the old Constitution, amended its provisions in the contrary direction from that which had been so fiercely sought, gave it guaranties of endurance while the continent lasts, and made its ensigns more eminent than ever in the regions from which they had been expelled. The very portions of the people which men sought its overthrow are now again its applauding adherents,—the great and constant reconciling force, the tranquillizing Irenarch, being the freedom which it leaves in their hands.

It has kept its place, this Republic of ours, in spite of the rapid expansion of the nation over territory so wide that the scanty strip of the original states is only as a fringe on its immense mantle. It has kept

Oration at New York.

its place, while vehement debates, involving the profoundest ethical principles, have stirred to its depths the whole public mind. It has kept its place, while the tribes of mankind have been pouring upon it, seeking the shelter and freedom which it gave. It saw an illustrious President murdered, by the bullet of an assassin. It saw his place occupied as quietly by another as if nothing unforeseen or alarming had occurred. It saw prodigious armies assembled, for its defence. It saw those armies, at the end of the war, marching in swift and long procession up the streets of the Capital, and then dispersing into their former peaceful citizenship, as if they had had no arms in their hands. The General before whose skill and will those armies had been shot upon the forces which opposed them, and whose word had been their military law, remained for three years an appointed officer of the government he had saved. Elected then to be the head of that government, and again re-elected by the ballots of his countrymen, in a few months more he will have retired, to be thenceforth a citizen like the rest, eligible to office, and entitled to vote, but with no thought of any prerogative descending to him, or to his children, from his great service and military fame. The Republic, whose triumphing armies he led, will remember his name, and be grateful for his work ; but neither to him, nor to any one else, will it ever give sovereignty over itself.

From the Lakes to the Gulf its will is the law, its

Permanence of the Republic.

dominion is complete. Its centripetal and centrifugal forces are balanced, almost as in the astronomy of the heavens. Decentralizing authority, it puts his own part of it into the hand of every citizen. Giving free scope to private enterprise, allowing not only, but accepting and encouraging, each movement of the public reason which is its only terrestrial rule, there is no threat, in all its sky, of division or downfall. It cannot be successfully assailed from within. It never will be assailed from without, with a blow at its life, while other nations continue sane.

It has been sometimes compared to a pyramid, broad-based and secure, not liable to overthrow as is obelisk or column, by storm or age. The comparison is just, but it is not sufficient. It should rather be compared to one of the permanent features of nature, and not to any artificial construction:—to the river, which flows, like our own Hudson, along the courses that nature opens, forever in motion, but forever the same; to the lake, which lies on common days level and bright in placid stillness, while it gathers its fullness from many lands, and lifts its waves in stormy strength when winds assail it; to the mountain, which is shaped by no formula of art, and which only rarely, in some supreme sun-burst, flushes with color, but whose roots the very earthquake cannot shake, and on whose brow the storms fall hurtless, while under its shelter the cottage nestles, and up its sides the gardens climb.

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So stands the Republic :

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air.

Our government has been permanent, as established upon the old Declaration, and steadily sustained by the undecaying and moulding life in the soul of the Nation. It has been peaceful, also, for the most part, in scheme and in spirit; and has shown at no time such an appetite for war as has been familiar, within the century, in many lands.

This may be denied, by foreign critics; or at any rate be explained, if the fact be admitted, by our isolation from other states, by our occupation in peaceful labors, which have left no room for martial enterprise, perhaps by an alleged want in us of that chivalric and high-pitched spirit which is gladdened by danger and which welcomes the fray. I do not think the explanation sufficient, the analysis just.

This people was trained to military effort, from its beginning. It had in it the blood of Saxon and Norman, neither of whom was afraid of war; the very same blood which a few years after was poured out like water at Marston Moor, and Naseby, and Dunbar. Ardor and fortitude were added to its spirit by those whose fathers had followed Coligni, by the children of those whom Alva and Parma could not conquer, or whom Gustavus had inspired with his intense and paramount will. With savages in the woods, and the gray wolf prowling around its cabins,

Martial Spirit of the People.

the hand of this people was from the first as familiar with the gun-stock as with mattock or plough; and it spent more time, in proportion to its leisure, it spent more life, in proportion to its numbers, from 1607 to 1776, in protecting itself against violent assault than was spent by France, the most martial of kingdoms, on all the bloody fields of Europe.

Then came the Revolution, with its years of war, and its crowning success, to intensify, and almost to consecrate this spirit, and to give it distribution; while, from that time, the nation has been taking into its substance abounding elements from all the fighting peoples of the earth. The Irishman, who is never so entirely himself as when the battle-storm hurtles around him; the Frenchman, who says "After you, Gentlemen," before the infernal fire of Fontenoy; the German, whose irresistible tread the world lately heard at Sadowa and Sedan,—these have been entering, representatives of two of them entering by millions, into the Republic. If any nation, therefore, should have a fierce and martial temper, this is the one. If any people should keep its peaceful neighbors in fear, lest its aggression should smite their homes, it is a people born, and trained, and replenished like this, admitting no rule but its own will, and conscious of a strength whose annual increase makes arithmetic pant.

What has been the fact? Lay out of sight that late civil war which could not be averted, when once

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it had been threatened, except by the sacrifice of the government itself, and a wholly unparalleled public suicide, and how much of war with foreign powers has the century seen? There has been a frequent crackle of musketry along the frontiers, as Indian tribes, which refused to be civilized, have slowly and fiercely retreated toward the West. There was one war declared against Tripoli, in 1801, when the Republic took by the throat the African pirates to whom Europe paid tribute, and when the gallantry of Preble and Decatur gave early distinction to our navy. There was a war declared against England, in 1812, when our seamen had been taken from under our flag, from the decks indeed of our national ships, and our commerce had been practically swept from the seas. There was a war affirmed already to exist in Mexico, in 1846, entered into by surprise, never formally declared, against which the moral sentiment of the nation rose widely in revolt, but which in its result added largely to our territory, opened to us Californian treasures, and wrote the names of Buena Vista and Monterey on our short annals.

That has been our military history; and if a People, as powerful and as proud, has anywhere been more peaceable also, in the last hundred years, the strictest research fails to find it. Smarting with the injury done us by England during the crisis of our national peril, in spite of the remonstrances presented through that distinguished citizen who should have

A Pacific Temper natural to the Republic.

been your orator to-day,—while hostile taunts had incensed our people, while burning ships had exasperated commerce, and while what looked like artful evasions had made statesmen indignant,—with a half-million men who had hardly yet laid down their arms, with a navy never before so vast, or so fitted for service,—when a war with England would have had the force of passion behind it, and would at any rate have shown to the world that the nation respects its starry flag, and means to have it secure on the seas,—we referred all differences to arbitration, appointed commissioners, tried the cause at Geneva, with advocates, not with armies, and got a prompt and ample verdict. If Canada now lay next to Yorkshire it would not be safer from armed incursion than it is when divided by only a custom-house from all the strength of this Republic.

The fact is apparent, and the reason not less so. A monarchy, just as it is despotic, finds incitement to war; for pre-occupation of the popular mind; to gratify nobles, officers, the army; for historic renown. An intelligent Republic hates war, and shuns it. It counts standing armies a curse only second to an annual pestilence. It wants no glory but from growth. It delights itself in arts of peace, seeks social enjoyment and increase of possessions, and feels instinctively that, like Israel of old, “its strength is to sit still.” It cannot bear to miss the husbandman from the fields, the citizen from the town, the house-

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father from the home, the worshipper from the church. To change or shape other people's institutions is no part of its business. To force them to accept its scheme of government would simply contradict and nullify its charter. Except, then, when it is startled into passion by the cry of a suffering under oppression which stirs its pulses into tumult, or when it is assailed in its own rights, citizens, property, it will not go to war; nor even then, if diplomacy can find a remedy for the wrong. "Millions for defence," said Cotesworth Pinckney to the French Directory, when Talleyrand in their name had threatened him with war, "but not a cent for tribute." He might have added, "and not a dollar for aggressive strife."

It will never be safe to insult such a nation, or to outrage its citizens; for the reddest blood is in its veins, and some Captain Ingraham may always appear, to lay his little sloop of war along-side the offending frigate, with shotted guns, and a peremptory summons. There is a way to make powder inexplusive; but, treat it chemically how you will, the dynamite will not stand many blows of the hammer. The detonating tendency is too permanent in it. But if left to itself, such a People will be peaceful, as ours has been. It will foster peace among the nations. It will tend to dissolve great permanent armaments, as the light conquers ice, and summer sunshine breaks the glacier which a hundred trip-hammers could only scar. The longer it continues,

The Day to be Remembered.

the more widely and effectively its influence spreads, the more will its benign example hasten the day, so long foretold, so surely coming, when

The war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags are furled,
In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.

Mr. President: Fellow-Citizens:—To an extent too great for your patience, but with a rapid incompleteness that is only too evident as we match it with the theme, I have outlined before you some of the reasons why we have right to commemorate the day whose hundredth anniversary has brought us together, and why the paper then adopted has interest and importance not only for us, but for all the advancing sons of men. Thank God that he who framed the Declaration, and he who was its foremost champion, both lived to see the nation they had shaped growing to greatness, and to die together, in that marvelous coincidence, on its semi-centennial! The fifty years which have passed since then have only still further honored their work. Mr. Adams was mistaken in the day which he named as the one to be most fondly remembered. It was not that on which Independence of the empire of Great Britain was formally resolved. It was that on which the reasons were given which justified the act, and the principles were announced which made it of secular significance to mankind. But he would have been absolutely right in saying of the fourth day

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what he did say of the second: it "will be the most remarkable epoch in the history of America; to be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival, commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God, from one end of the continent to the other."

It will not be forgotten, in the land or in the earth, until the stars have fallen from their poise; or until our vivid morning-star of Republican liberty, not losing its lustre, has seen its special brightness fade in the ampler effulgence of a freedom universal!

But while we rejoice in that which is past, and gladly recognize the vast organic mystery of life which was in the Declaration, the plans of Providence which slowly and silently, but with ceaseless progression, had led the way to it, the immense and enduring results of good which from it have flowed, let us not forget the duty which always equals privilege, and that of peoples, as well as of persons, to whomsoever much is given, shall only therefore the more be required. Let us consecrate ourselves, each one of us, here, to the further duties which wait to be fulfilled, to the work which shall consummate the great work of the Fathers!

From scanty soils come richest grapes, and on severe and rocky slopes the trees are often of toughest fibre. The wines of Rudesheim and Johannisberg cannot be grown in the fatness of gardens, and the cedars of Lebanon disdain the levels of marsh

The Duty of American Citizens.

and meadow. So a heroism is sometimes native to penury which luxury enervates, and the great resolution which sprang up in the blast, and blossomed under inclement skies, may lose its shapely and steadfast strength when the air is all of summer softness. In exuberant resources is to be the coming American peril; in a swiftly increasing luxury of life. The old humility, hardihood, patience, are too likely to be lost when material success again opens, as it will, all avenues to wealth, and when its brilliant prizes solicit, as again they will, the national spirit.

Be it ours to endeavor that that temper of the Fathers which was nobler than their work shall live in the children, and exalt to its tone their coming career; that political intelligence, patriotic devotion, a reverent spirit toward Him who is above, an exulting expectation of the future of the World, and a sense of our relation to it, shall be, as of old, essential forces in our public life; that education and religion keep step all the time with the Nation's advance, and the School and the Church be always at home wherever its flag shakes out its folds. In a spirit worthy the memories of the Past let us set ourselves to accomplish the tasks which, in the sphere of national politics, still await completion. We burn the sunshine of other years, when we ignite the wood or coal upon our hearths. We enter a privilege which ages have secured, in our daily enjoyment of political freedom. While the kindling glow irradiates our

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homes, let it shed its lustre on our spirit, and quicken it for its further work.

Let us fight against the tendency of educated men to reserve themselves from politics, remembering that no other form of human activity is so grand or effective as that which affects, first the character, and then the revelation of character in the government, of a great and free People. Let us make religious dissension here, as a force in politics, as absurd as witchcraft.* Let party names be nothing to us, in comparison with that costly and proud inheritance of liberty and of law, which parties exist to conserve and enlarge, which any party will have here to maintain if it would not be buried, at the next cross-roads, with a stake through its breast. Let us seek the unity of all sections of the Republic, through the prevalence in all of mutual respect, through the assurance in all of local freedom, through the mastery in all of that supreme spirit which flashed from the lips of Patrick Henry, when he said, in the first Continental Congress, "I am not a Virginian, but an American." Let us take care that labor maintains its ancient place

* Cromwell is sometimes considered a bigot. His rule on this subject is therefore the more worthy of record: "Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies. * * Take heed of being sharp, or too easily sharpened by others, against those to whom you can object little, but that they square not with you in every opinion concerning matters of religion. If there be any other offence to be charged upon him, that must, in a judicial way, receive determination."—Letter to Major-General Crawford, 10th March, 1643.

Our Relation to Past, and Future.

of privilege and honor, and that industry has no fetters imposed, of legal restraint or of social discredit, to hinder its work or to lessen its wage. Let us turn, and overturn, in public discussion, in political change, till we secure a Civil Service, honorable, intelligent, and worthy of the land, in which capable integrity, not partisan zeal, shall be the condition of each public trust; and let us resolve that whatever it may cost, of labor and of patience, of sharper economy and of general sacrifice, it shall come to pass that wherever American labor toils, wherever American enterprise plans, wherever American commerce reaches, thither again shall go as of old the country's coin—the American Eagle, with the encircling stars and golden plumes!

In a word, Fellow-Citizens, the moral life of the nation being ever renewed, all advancement and timely reform will come as comes the bourgeoning of the tree from the secret force which fills its veins. Let us each of us live, then, in the blessing and the duty of our great citizenship, as those who are conscious of unreckoned indebtedness to a heroic and prescient Past:—the grand and solemn lineage of whose freedom runs back beyond Bunker Hill or the Mayflower, runs back beyond muniments and memories of men, and has the majesty of far centuries on it! Let us live as those for whom God hid a continent from the world, till He could open all its scope to the freedom and faith of gathered peoples, from many lands,

Oration at New York.

to be a nation to His honor and praise! Let us live as those to whom He commits the magnificent trust of blessing peoples many and far, by the truths which He has made our life, and by the history which He helps us to accomplish.

Such relation to a Past ennobles this transient and vanishing life. Such a power of influence on the distant and the Future, is the supremest terrestrial privilege. It is ours, if we will, in the mystery of that spirit which has an immortal and a ubiquitous life. With the swifter instruments now in our hands, with the land compacted into one immense embracing home, with the world opened to the interchange of thought, and thrilling with the hopes that now animate its life, each American citizen has superb opportunity to make his influence felt afar, and felt for long!

Let us not be unmindful of this ultimate and inspiring lesson of the hour! By all the memories of the Past, by all the impulse of the Present, by the noblest instincts of our own souls, by the touch of His sovereign Spirit upon us, God make us faithful to the work, and to Him! that so not only this city may abide, in long and bright tranquillity of peace, when our eyes have shut forever on street, and spire, and populous square; that so the land, in all its future, may reflect an influence from this anniversary; and that, when another century has passed, the sun which then ascends the heavens may look on a world

The Nation at the Next Centennial.

advanced and illumined beyond our thought, and here may behold the same great Nation, born of struggle, baptized into liberty, and in its second terrific trial purchased by blood, then expanded and multiplied till all the land blooms at its touch, and still one in its life, because still pacific, Christian, free !



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